COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

THE AVENGERS® FILES

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST SUPER-HEROES!

■ THE COMPLETE HISTORY!
■ ALL THE LINEUPS!
■ A TYPICAL DAY!
■ AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!
LOKI! PREPARE FOR BATTLE!
THE AVENGERS... BAH! I'LL DESTROY YOU ALL!
Plus Roger Stern and Steve Englehart reveal their future plans for Ear th's Mightiest Superheroes!

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

FILES SERIES EDITED BY HAL SCHUSTER

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE SPOTLIGHT ON:

COMICS FILE NUMBER ONE

Comics File Magazine is © 1986 by Psi Fi Movie Press, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, without express written permission from the publisher. All correspondence should be addressed to: Psi Fi Movie Press, Inc., 8399 Topanga Cyn. Blvd., Suite 210, Canoga Park, CA 91304. All characters, their likenesses and all artwork are © 1986 Marvel Comics Group. Page 41 and cover characters and likenesses are © 1986 Marvel Comics Group; artwork for page 41 and covers © 1986 Movie Pblishers Services, Inc.
Published under license from New Media Books, Inc.

COMICS FILE MAGAZINE is published to provide a historical record of that phase of American popular culture known as comic books. If this book helps to preserve the record of the many accomplishments of the talented creators working in that field, for whatever company, then it will have admirably served the purpose for which it was created.

Dedicated to all of the talented people that have brought the Avengers to life on both coasts!

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....10
HISTORY OF THE AVENGERS.....14
THE LINEUPS.....26
A YEAR IN THE LIFE (BY DOUG HIGHSMITH).....32
STERN AND ENGLEHART INTERVIEW.....40

INTRODUCTION

It seems that every company has to have one. Timely had theirs, although many of the stories were done as a time implant in the Seventies as tales of the Invaders—and then the Liberty Legion as well! DC had the JSA and now the JLA. Even Archie had the Might Crusaders. It just seems inevitable that there be a gathering place for the mightiest of the mighty, someplace where all of a company's superstars can get together and swap gossip. And fight the bad guys of course. At Marvel Comics it was the Avengers. Thor, Iron Man, Ant Man and his Wasp and the Hulk were predestined to share an adventure. The other major Marvel Universe stalwarts all missed out on the fun for one reason or another—Spider-Man was too much of a loner, the Fantastic Four already had their own combination of a family picnic and a superhero group going.

Through the years the purpose of the group was modified a bit, but it never deviated too far from focusing on the main contendors in Marvel-land. A couple of lineups seemed to lack the big guns, such as the team that Cap led for a while after **Avengers** 16, but on the whole, some flashy headliner or two was there to carry the banner. Cap himself had become a mainstay of the the Marvel Universe again by this time of course. Most lineups included at least one or more of the guys that started it all back in the very first issue.

The team was usually in on the big jobs. They were the focus for the Kree/Skrull Wars, they were there at the death of Captain Marvel. Some of the group showed up for the festivities initiated by the Beyonder in the Secret Wars. If it was a major event in the Marvel mythos, they played some role in it.

The slightly modified mission of the Avengers, which I allude to above, became to act as a sort of preserving grounds for superheroes that had either stumbled or were new and on the make. When Ant-Man cum Giant Man cum Goliath cum Yellowjacket could no longer carry his own tales, he became a main fixture of the Avengers. When the Black Panther failed to keep his own books he kept popping up for Avengers missions. Wonder Man, Black Knight, Vision and just loads of other heroes are prime examples of super-types who received their first real chance to shine in the pages of **The Avengers**. Sub-Mariner is perhaps the best current example of a hero kept alive by appearing as part of the supergroup. Moon Knight is about to join the West Coast team for exactly the same purpose.

The Avengers have always been the most established group in the Marvel Universe. The X-Men are hunted and feared by humanity at large. The Defenders, Champions and all the rest barely hang on around the edges. Even the Fantastic Four is a different type of institution, a family rather than a group organized to formalize the concept of the superhero in the public mind. It is the Avengers that receive special clearance and are called upon to come to the assistance of the government most often. It would be ludicrous for the goverment to have attempted to restrict the membership of the X-Men or the Fantastic Four. Yet when exactly that happened to the Avengers, no-one really batted an eye!

The Avengers are a virtual clearing house for the super-powered population of the Marvel Universe. Characters come and go, usually without the formality of an induction or a vote of acceptance for new members—as was so

AVENGERS
12¢
IND
61
FEB
THE AVENGERS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP

MARVEL
ANNUAL
HULK TIMES A HUNDRED EQUALS HOLOCAUST!
AVENGERS
ANNUAL
$1.00
U.K. 50p
Can $1.25
13
1984

INTRODUCTION

effectively done over at the competition for such groups as the Legion or the League. Heroes just show up as needed. Whoever happens to be hanging out at the mansion comes along for the ride.

Looking over the list of past and present Avengers, it seems easier to note those that never joined rather than those that did. Spider-Man, Daredevil, the first Captain Marvell, Warlock, the X-Men and the Fantastic Four. Even the Beast has been an Avenger, and recently, when the Thing was temporarily absent from the FF, there was serious talk of giving him a membership card for the West Coast team. The idea was cancelled when a new subplot required the Thing to flee mankind for the recesses of Monster Isle just in time for the 25th anniversary issue of the FF.

The Marvel Universe is a world of change and it is not uncommon for a character to fight the Avengers on one occasion and then return as a member at a later time. The Sub-Mariner took on the group when they were arguably at their strongest ever—**Avengers** 3—and is now a full-fledged member of the team. That is, if Namor can truly be a part of any team with his fiery individuality.

Recently, under the able hands of Roger Stern, John Buscema and Tom Palmer, the main title has again become a book where interesting heroes undertake exciting adventures.

Most dramatic of all changes is the splitting of the team into two groups—Avengers East and West. With Hawkeye heading up another team based in Los Angeles, the group can really span the continent when they are needed. Things have progressed from the early days when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created an electric thrill throughout comic book fandom when they first launched the original book. There have been other high points to the series as you will read in the page of this file. The halycon tales of Roy Thomas—also illustrated by the talented pair of Buscema and Palmer, the last time they were on the book, or Thomas and Adams or the first stint that Englehart spent on the title...yes there were many exciting periods.

It was when Thomas, Buscema and Palmer were first on the series that the new Black Knight—does anyone remember the old villainous version, a classic Avengers foe (no visual of the character even appears in the current Marvel Handbook!)?—and showed that he had potential to be an interesting hero. After years of creative hibernation, the Knight is again a featured part of the team. Elsewhere in this file you will learn of all of the myriad comings and goings of the Marvel Multitude through the ranks of the Avengers.

We'll also look at a somewhat typical year in the life of the team—arbitrarily picking a period exactly five years in the past. Finally, we'll chat with the two writers who currently plan the direction of the pair of Avengers titles—**The Avengers** and **The West Coast Avengers**. This interview has been freshly updated just for this file.

Well, enough of my ramblings. It is well past time that you began to recount the many adventures of the colorful heroes who proudly bear the title of Avenger!

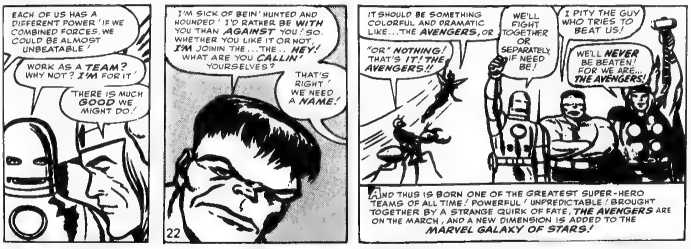
THE TEAM HISTORY

While all of Marvel's books have had changes rung on them throughout their existence, the all time record holder must be *The Avengers*. Conceived about the same time as *The X-Men*, it once again returned to the Justice League of America superhero group concept which inspired the creation of the *Fantastic Four*, but this time paralleled the concept much further by uniting several of Marvel's major characters into one team book.

Besides creating a new title, this appealing series of "Book-Length Super-Epics featuring some of the Earth's Greatest Super-Heroes!" as issue number one dubbed them), also served to acquaint fans of Thor or the Hulk with Iron Man and the Ant-Man, or visa-versa. For those who hadn't been following the other titles, *The Avengers* introduced them to these other characters and possibly created a new interest in them enough so that the reader would begin buying the other character's books. This is what happened to me, for in my case it showed me that Thor was a much more interesting character than I'd thought and so in 1964, I began collecting it and it quickly became one of my favorites.

It was no coincidence that all of the other characters in *Avengers #1* had their own series elsewhere except for the Hulk. Thor was starring in *Journey Into Mystery*, Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* and Ant-Man and the Wasp in *Tales to Astonish*. These titles would eventually be changed to reflect the character who starred in them, but like *The Avengers*, the roster on some would alter before the title change took place. *Journey Into Mystery* became *Thor* but by that time *Tales of Suspense* was featuring both Iron Man and Captain America and it was decided to spin Iron Man off into his own separate book and change *Tales of Suspense* into *Captain America* with #100. *Tales to Astonish*, meanwhile, had added the Hulk as a back-up strip to Giant-Man (formerly Ant-Man), but the Hulk eclipsed Giant-Man in reader interest until after innumerable costume changes Giant-Man faded out and was replaced by the Sub-Mariner (who was the villain in *Avengers #3*). Thus Giant-Man (later known as Yellow-Jacket) appeared only in *The Avengers* after losing his own strip, but by this time the title was a popular one on its own and was no longer being used as a shill to popularize and promote the solo character books. Ironically, it was Ant-Man's idea at the end of *Avengers #1* to create the team and that title became his salvation for years to come until he finally faded away after almost two decades of struggling to find an interesting costumed identity.

Avengers #1 was a series of incidents held together by the secret manipulations of Loki as he struggled to lure Thor to Asgard for a showdown. Using the Hulk as bait, Loki frames the Hulk in an apparent train wreck attempt and then sees to it that when the Teen Brigade (established in *Hulk #6*) tries to summon the Fantastic Four to get to the bottom of the incident, the radio beam is misdirected so that Thor receives the message. Unbeknownst to Loki, though, the transmission is also picked up by Iron man and Ant-Man. All of these characters are in-


EACH OF US HAS A DIFFERENT POWER! IF WE COMBINED FORCES, WE COULD BE ALMOST UNBEATABLE!
WORK AS A TEAM? WHY NOT? I'M FOR IT!
THERE IS MUCH GOOD WE MIGHT DO!
I'M SICK OF BEIN' HUNTED AND HOUNDED! I'D RATHER BE WITH YOU THAN AGAINST YOU! SO, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, I'M JOININ THE... THE... HEY! WHAT ARE YOU CALLIN' YOURSELVES?
THAT'S RIGHT! WE NEED A NAME!
22
IT SHOULD BE SOMETHING COLORFUL AND DRAMATIC LIKE... THE AVENGERS, OR...
"OR" NOTHING! THAT'S IT! THE AVENGERS!!
WE'LL FIGHT TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY IF NEED BE!
I PITY THE GUY WHO TRIES TO BEAT US!
WE'LL NEVER BE BEATEN! FOR WE ARE... THE AVENGERS!
AND THUS IS BORN ONE OF THE GREATEST SUPER-HERO TEAMS OF ALL TIME! POWERFUL! UNPREDICTABLE! BROUGHT TOGETHER BY A STRANGE QUIRK OF FATE, THE AVENGERS ARE ON THE MARCH, AND A NEW DIMENSION IS ADDED TO THE MARVEL GALAXY OF STARS!

Early issues demonstrated the power of the new Marvel heroes

troduced in such a way that their abilities and identities are quickly and easily explained to readers unfamiliar with them. Even Rick Jones, the Hulk's sidekick during this period, is shown reading about the Hulk's apparent attack on a train and exclaiming, "It can't be! He'd never do a thing like that!...No matter what!! Or...Or would he?" which establishes the uneasy alliance Rick has with the Hulk.

The story finally unfolds into a battle between Thor and Loki and of Iron Man, Ant-Man and the Wasp versus the Hulk. The Hulk and Thor clearly dominate the action as they're more colorful characters. Iron Man still had his old, bulky gold armor here and the Ant-Man was limited by his size to taking indirect action and using ants to carry out his orders. Even so, the Ant-Man was an interesting character in his day and when used properly in later issues, showed how interesting he could be.

The work here by Jack Kirby shows why he was the pre-eminent super-hero artist of the Sixties. His layouts and composition are straightforward and uncluttered, as well as dynamic. Panels are seldom crowded and often backgrounds are sparse to emphasize the characters and action in the foreground, which is important when up to nine panels per page are used as they are on several pages in the book. This was before Kirby started drawing figures which were more angular and with hard edges rather than the smooth human dynamics he did so well in comics in the Sixties. This one comic is an excellent textbook of comic book storytelling in the superhero form as it employs many types of action and character interaction.

The first eight issues of the *Avengers* were drawn by Kirby although *The Jack Kirby Treasury* (1982) spuriously credits Kirby with every issue up through #16. (Kirby did do the layouts of #16.)

The first eight issues are all very strong and some of the best in the series. They also bring up the question of how direct Kirby's in

volvement with the writing was as id's stated that he plotted every book he did for Marvel. Once again, the style of approach to the writing hanged when Kirby stopped rawing the book and the direction it had during the first eight issues iffused and lost focus. The first ight seemed to be following a thought out pattern. Beginning with number nine the title started becoming a bit aimless for awhile.

During those first few issues, though, a lot happened. Enough so that the reader hungered to see what would happen the following month.

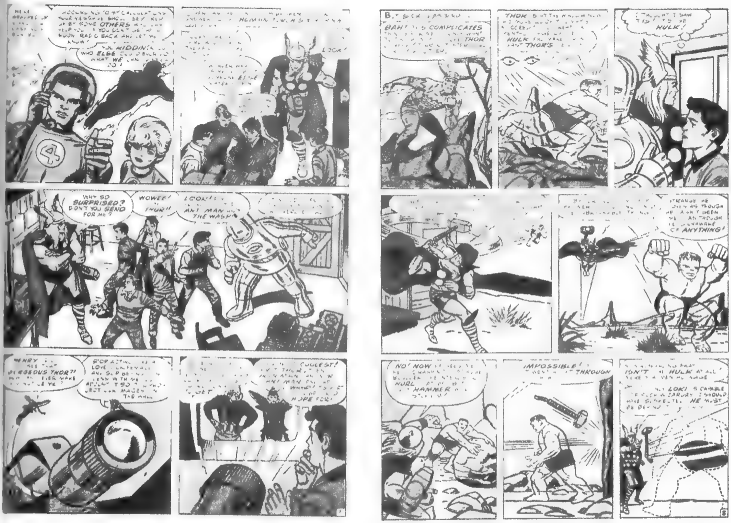
In issue #2, a character called The Space Phantom imitated the various Avengers in order to cause them to fight amongst themselves, and true to the spirit of Marvel comics, the characters never confronted one another or demanded an explanation for such and so, they just attacked as soon as they saw the supposedly offending party. It was no wonder that even after the truth came out the Hulk decided to wash his hands of them because of how quickly they were ready to mistrust him with no questions asked.

This carried over into #3 when the Hulk joined forces with another misanthrope, the Sub-Mariner, to take revenge on Mankind and in the process have a full-tilt, knock-down, drag-out, all-the-stops-pulled-out fight as only Jack Kirby can do them. Twenty-three pages weren't enough to hold all the action as *Thor #112* featured a flash-back to that issue of a fight between Thor and the Hulk which took place off-stage in *Avengers #3*, so the effects of that issue were still being experienced months later.

But issue #4 is the one which took the fans by surprise and became a landmark. Just as *Fantastic Four #4* re-introduced the World War II character of Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, *Avengers #4* reintroduced Captain America!

Captain America had seemingly reappeared, drawn by Jack Kirby, in *Strange Tales #114*, but this turned out to be an old foe of the Human Torch's who had disguised

From the first the Marvel Universe tied all heroes together



himself as Cap. Since the foe was actually the Acrobat, his imitation was nearly flawless. When Captain America was given his own strip in *Tales Of Suspense*, The Acrobat turned up there as well, as sort of a hero/villain.

Headlined "The Return of Captain America" on the cover, the story opened with Namor licking his wounds after the battle in *Avengers #3* and dispersing a group of Eskimos who are worshiping a strange icy slab which contains a dark shape trapped within. Namor hurls it into the sea where the warm waters of the Gulf Stream cause the ice to slowly melt. On their way back from the remote island where the battle with Namor and the Hulk transpired, the Avengers spot the floating body from the observation port of their special undersea craft. Bringing the body aboard, they find a frozen figure wearing a familiar red, white and blue costume beneath the tattered remains of an army uniform. Captain America revives from suspended animation in dramatic fashion and after some quick reflex tests to show that he's not an imposter (at least they didn't fight it out, which showed rare restraint on Marvel's part), Cap explained how he had dropped from a booby-trapped plane and was hurled into the sea by the same explosion which killed his World War II partner, Bucky Barnes. Somehow, when he sunk into the sea, his body froze, although how that occured, exactly is brushed over since Cap certainly couldn't remember what happened when he was unconscious. In the mighty Marvel Age of reexploring history and tying up loose ends, there may be a story in this.

For several years fans debated over how the Fifties Captain America fit into all this. Was all that stuff Earth Two like D.C.'s Justice Society stories? Eventually

UNTIL, FINALLY--NAUGHT REMAINS BUT A FROZEN, PETRIFIED FIGURE IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION... A FIGURE WHICH DRIFTS PAST THE UNDERSEA CRAFT OF-- THE AVENGERS!
STOP THE ENGINES, IRON MAN! THERE IS SOMEONE OUT THERE!
LOOKS LIKE A HUMAN! BUT HOW IS IT POSSIBLE?!
CAUTIOUSLY OPENING THE AIR-TIGHT ESCAPE HATCH, THE HUGE HAND OF GIANT-MAN SEIZES THE RIGID FIGURE, AND...
I'VE GOT HIM
WHO CAN HE BE? WHY IS HE FROZEN SOLID?
WAIT! DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE IT? IT'S THE FAMOUS RED WHITE AND BLUE GARB OF-- CAPTAIN AMERICA!
THE WASP IS RIGHT!
CAN THIS REALLY BE THE FAMOUS SHIELD OF THE ONCE-MIGHTY CRIME-FIGHTER?
AND HIS FACE MASK --WITH THE PROUD LETTER "A" ON IT! IT MUST BE HIM!
ALL OF
LISTEN
ISN'T
HE'S
BREATHI
HIS EY
THEY'
FLICKER

CAPTAIN AMERICA JOINS... AVENGERS!
A TALE DESTINED TO BECOME A MAGNIFICENT MILESTONE IN THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS!
BRINGING YOU THE GREAT SUPER-HERO WHICH YOUR WONDERFUL AVALANCHE OF FAN MAIL DEMANDED!
GLORIOUSLY WRITTEN BY: STAN LEE
GRANDLY ILLUSTRATED BY: JACK KIRBY
GALLANTLY LETTERED BY: ART SIMEK
STEP FORWARD, CAPTAIN AMERICA! YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE IS HERE... AMONG THE AVENGERS!
EDITOR'S NOTE: WE SINCERELY SUGGEST YOU SAVE THIS ISSUE! WE FEEL YOU WILL TREASURE IT IN TIME TO COME!
THE MIGHTY MARVEL COMICS GROUP IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT JACK KIRBY DREW THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN AMERICA DURING THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS... AND NOW HE DRAWS IT AGAIN! ALSO, STAN LEE'S FIRST SCRIPT DURING THOSE FABLED DAYS WAS CAPTAIN AMERICA -- AND NOW HE AUTHORS IT AGAIN! THUS, THE CHRONICLE OF COMICDOM TURNS FULL CIRCLE, REACHING A NEW PINNACLE OF GREATNESS!

THE MIGHTY AVENGERS!
WHEN DIES A LEGEND!
STAN LEE EDITOR • ROY THOMAS WRITER • JOHN BUSCEMA ARTIST • TOM PALMER • SAM ROSEN LETTERER

it was explained in the Seventies that the Fifties Cap was a second Captain America created with an imitation of the formula which brought the first one into being; an imperfect formula which eventually drove the second Captain America crazy. This explanation went down hard with fans who'd thrilled to Cap's adventures in the Fifties and felt cheated to learn that it was never really Cap at all, but just a crazed commie hunter. But that's how the rewritten history went!

There are interesting scenes in *Avengers #4* of Cap returning to civilization and finding himself knee-deep in a mystery involving an eons old alien and a denouement which takes place on another remote island and in the middle of a pitched battle with the legions of the Sub-Mariner.

The rest of the Kirby issues read equally interesting, such as "Invasion of the Lava Men" in #5 (spun off from ideas introduced in *Thor #97*), "Masters of Evil" in #6, wherein various foes of the Avengers teamed up, including the interesting but seldom used Radioactive Man, and "Kang, the Conqueror" in #8 which introduced the time lord and expanded the paradox which linked him to Rama-Tut (*Fantastic Four #19*) and Dr. Doom. The paradox was later expanded still further into an unnecessarily contrived and complicated scheme of characters.

Avengers #9 introduced and killed off Wonder Man, a character who would be revived years later to become part of the Avengers.

Issue #16 began what would become a tradition, that of a rapid turnover of the roster so that members would come and go as though through a revolving door. Thor and Iron Man left the group and they were replaced by Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch. It wasn't quite the same. This was ostensibly done because Thor was so powerful that he could generally take on the menaces single-handed and didn't really need the help of the others. At times one could detect the writer holding back or

SO SHALL THE VISION!
WANDA!
I'LL WAVE AS SOON AS I'M UP!
IT SEEMS HOPELESS... BUT I MUST SCAN THE DEEPEST FLOOR -- PERHAPS TO FIND SOME TRACE --
WAIT! THERE IS A WAY! DIG BELOW US!
YOU HAVE THE UPPER HAND, JASON BURCH! BE WILL GO WITH YOU!
HOPE IT'S DEEP

displaying just how powerful Thor really was. A similar argument could be made for Iron Man in the absence of Thor, certainly when the remaining members were Captain America, Giant-Man, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch. The powered down lineup also signaled powered down stories. Giant-Man changed his name to Goliath but a costume change doesn't change the character. Marvel was clearly uncertain what to do with him other than drop his own strip from *Tales to Astonish* where he had begun as one of Marvel's first super-heroes.

Soon Hawkeye and the Black Panther were added to the line-up, which made for more interest and diversity, but it was the introduction of the Vision in *Avengers #57* that really gave the stories a boost. The android avenger, created by Hank Pym and then used by the computer Ultron 5 as an unknowing agent, was an interesting device, although the frequent return of the supposedly destroyed computer (Ultron 6, etc., etc.) did become tiresome.

One of the more interesting stories in this period was "Some Say The World Will End In Fire, Some Say In Ice!" in *Avengers #61*. Written by Roy Thomas and drawn by John Buscema, with crisp inks by George Klein, it was the conclusion of a story begun in *Dr. Strange #178* and guest-starred not only the Master of the Mystic Arts, but the Black Knight as well. This late Sixties issue was from the period when John Buscema was still bringing a lot of energy and enchantment to his work, such as he did in those classic issues of the *Silver Surfer*. The inking by Klein is careful and defined, not like the too often rushed looking inking which fills many comics today.

During this period Goliath went through another change when Hank Pym became schizophrenic and adopted the identity of Yellowjacket in which he masqueraded as a mystery man to the other Avengers. Shortly after this he gave up the Goliath identity

in the belief that the years of growing and shrinking had brought on his brief mental imbalance. At this same time Hawkeye became disenchanted with his own contribution as an Avenger and in #63 he adopted the Goliath identity for a time, but after a few years he returned to the more popular Hawkeye identity.

Avengers #66 and *67* featured two issues by a newcomer to Marvel at the time, namely one Barry Smith. This was during Smith's Kirby Imitation period and the inking by Syd Shores on #66 complimented Smith's pencils best and ironed out any awkwardness, whereas the George Klein inking on #67 left some awkward attempts at Kirby-style exaggeration intact (such as panel one on page ten in which Yellowjacket's legs are unsuccessfully foreshortened). As far as Smith's Kirby imitations went, #66 looked smooth and natural whereas #67 was very self-conscious and forced by comparison.

Sometime before, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch had left the Avengers when Wanda lost her hex power. They reappeared in #75 when during her attempts to regain it magically, she encounters Arkon and is kidnapped to his other dimensional world. The appearance of Arkon, a Conan type character in a science fiction setting, predated the appearance of Marvel's Conan by less than a handf of months. The character achieve more personality in the conclusio of #76 and with slick art by Joh Buscema and Tom Palmer, remains one of the mo memorable in the series long ru Oddly enough, when the Avenger burst through the barrier to reac Arkon's world, Thor and Iron Ma are with them even though the had not appeared in the sto before that moment. It's reveale that it was Thor's hammer whic brought them through the barri after all other efforts had faile and the reappearance of these tw old Avengers is a welcome on making the story even more colo ful.

Over the years the Avengers has become a rather large organization with provisional members, members on inactive status and the like and it was not at all unusual for inactive members like Thor and Iron Man to suddenly put in an appearance, especially since Tony Stark is Iron Man and the Avengers mansion is leased from him. Thor and Iron Man also guest-starred in the story in issues #80-82 and the problem of using Thor creatively came up again when it was Thor who single handedly ended the menace in the final showdown.

Although the origin of the Black Panther had appeared in the *Fantastic Four*, drawn by the character's creator, Jack Kirby, a slightly expanded version appeared in *Avengers #87* written by Roy Thomas and drawn by Frank Giacola and Sal Buscema. Marvel had been of two minds during this time about using a black character named The Black Panther in their comics. Although created before the rise of the militant Black Panther party in the late Sixties, they found themselves with an interesting black character whose name was nonetheless coincidentally tied to a militant element. In an attempt to use this interesting black character and avoid controversy, they began referring to him as just "the Panther", which is what he's called in *Avengers #87*. On the cover Marvel backed off even further by never using The Black Panther's name in any form but rather his African name, T'Challa. The cover of #87 even proclaims, "Revealed At Last! The Origin Of T'Challa!" Although the cover makes it clear that he's a black character, new readers must have wondered what in the world a "T'Challa" was. It would be another couple of years before the Black Panther's original name was completely restored.

The Black Panther was created by Jack Kirby with a sleek black costume which covered the character's entire body, except for the eyes. But when he began appearing in the Avengers, his mask was changed so that it was obvious that he was a black character. Unfortunately, this change made the costume look awkward somehow rather than mysterious and cat-like such as Kirby had intended. After several issues the costume reverted back to its original and more effective form.

Perhaps the single best known Avengers saga outside of the return of Captain America in #4 was the Kree/Skrull War series which began in #89 and concluded in #97. This graphic novel (which is what it truly was) involved Captain Marvel and most all of the Avengers of the time (Thor, Iron Man, Captain America, the Vision, Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch and Goliath). It concerned the Kree branding Captain Marvel as a traitor to their race and then the Skrull going after Mar-vell for information he possessed. In the middle of all this, Mar-vell is branded an enemy allen by Congress and is wanted for questioning about a Kree attempt against Earth made at the North Pole. The Avengers harbor Captain Marvel in secret while they attempt to clear his name. The Inhumans, who are actually Kree descendants, come into the middle of all this as well and it's not surprising that the whole saga spanned nine issues. So much happened each issue, with important plot events following swiftly on top of one another, that unlike other multi-part stories done in other books, this one was neither padded nor stretched beyond the requirements of the story. It's no wonder that it's considered the crowning touch to Roy Thomas's several year stint as writer on the book.

As with any Marvel comic, musical artists were played with the Avengers so that the illustrative team changed every few issues. But during the most crucial issues of the Kree/Skrull War saga, Neal Adams stepped in to pencil issues #93-96 (with inks by Tom Palmer), which insured that Roy's star-spanning story would be translated into the most dynamic visual terms possible. (Marvel recently reprinted the last five issues of this continued story, beginning with the Neal Adams issues, in a two-issue deluxe format on high quality paper.)

All four of the Thomas/Adams issues are excellent, but the one which stands out just slightly ahead of the others is #93, which features the Ant-Man in a "Journey To The Center Of The Android!" in chapter two. This is Ant-Man's only appearance in the Adams issues and he shows up just in time to enter the Vision in order to repair some delicate internal mechanisms which have immobilized the Avenger. But wasn't he just Yellowjacket a couple of issues before? The reasoning presented is that the Avengers had sent out a call for the original team to appear, and Henry Pym was the Ant-Man way back when. Sure it's contrived but it's okay since Ant-Man has always been the most interesting of the character's many versions. Henry Pym would return a few issues later as Yellowjacket once again and the Ant-Man identity would be given over to an entirely different person some years later.

The Ant-Man section is interesting not just for nostalgia's sake, but because Neal Adams captures all the romance of the character that Kirby did during his first few stories beginning back in *Tales To Astonish #35*. The interior of the Vision as seen by Ant-Man is fascinating and unusual and is the high point of the issue. This

IN ANY OF THE ANT-MAN STORIES SO FAR, HE'S BEEN ABLE TO SAY, "I'M GOING TO GO TO THE ANTHILL AND TALK TO THE ANTS!" AND IF THE SCARLET WITCH DOESN'T WANT TO STAY, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT!
JUST LET ME HIT HIM ONCE! CAN I JUST ONCE! HOW ABOUT IT?
THAT WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING, BEAST!
IT YOUR ANT-MAN! YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO DO THINGS ABOUT THIS, EITHER!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THIS IS THE END OF THE AVENGERS!
AGAIN? BUT THAT TRICK NEVER WORKS!
SHUT UP, BEAST!

sequence was clearly the inspiration for a similar one involving the new Ant-Man in *Iron Man #133* when Ant-Man had to find his way through the walls of Tony Stark's armor in order to make a crucial repair after Iron Man has been felled in a brutal fight with the Hulk. It's a nice idea but it pales next to the Adams/Palmer sequence in *Avengers #93*. This sequence in *Avengers* is so interesting that few people ever noticed that it was padded so that six new pages could be added in the middle of Ant-Man's passage when it was decided, at the last moment, that *Avengers #93* would be a thirty-four page, 25 cents issue instead of the standard twenty-three page, 15 cents issue. In fact it served as a bridge in that #92 was 15 cents while #94 was the first 20 cent issue (although still the same size as #92's fifteen cent version).

After Roy Thomas left *The Avengers*, a number of other writers followed in short order. Steve Englehart did some fine issues, but when he began having deadline problems, Gerry Conway was asked to take over the title. Steve Englehart was highly resentful of this and has even gone on record accusing Conway of outright stealing the book from him for no other reason than that Conway wanted to do *The Avengers* at Marvel having just come off writing the *Justice League of America* at DC. Conway denies those circumstances:

"I didn't actually even want to write the book, but the previous writer was late and even had I wanted to take on the title I would have wanted a couple months to gear up for it. As it was I had to jump right in without any planning as to where the title was heading. I only wrote it for eight issues so it was just an interim thing. I left the book just as abruptly as I'd joined it as it was."

The Avengers have never remained stagnant, though, no matter who was doing the book. The Vision married the Scarlet Witch (which opened the door on all sorts of unanswered questions regarding human/android marriage) and in *Giant Size Avengers #1* (1974, not to be confused with *The Avengers Annual #1*) it was revealed that the father of Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, was the Golden Age character The Whizzer. But that was what Roy Thomas wrote. In 1979 in issues #185-187, in a plot by Mark Gruenwald and Steven Grant (based on events put into motion by David Michelinie), it was strongly hinted that Magneto was their father (which was late proven to be fact) and that The Whizzer had been lying. But had he been lying when Roy Thomas spun his fable in 1974? If there's anything that Marvel has historically not liked to leave alone, it's history.

Another problem the Avengers encountered was the fluctuating size of the team. This came to a head in #181 (written by David Michelinie and drawn by John Byrne and Gene Day) when in order for The Avengers to regain their Avengers Priority rating with the government, the team was pared down to seven members: Iron Man, The Vision, Captain America, The Scarlet Witch, The Beast, The Wasp and The Falcon. The scene is amusingly handled by showing the pleased and surprised faces of each chosen member except that when The Falcon's name is announced, we're instead shown the startled face of Hawkeye. Other Avengers not chosen who were active at the time and present at the

...peting included Capt. Marvel, ...onder Man, the Guardians of the ...laxy, Thor, Yellowjacket, the ...ack Widow, Quicksilver, Her... ...les and Ms. Marvel, just to name ...w. There's even a satirical in... ...change about how the Falcon ...as chosen by the Government ...presentative in order to have ...inority representation, which ...nores the fact that mutants, gods ...d androids are an even smaller ...inority than any racial group. This ...overnmental interference in the ...atter was not lifted until #191.

Artists in the late Seventies and ...rly Eighties included George ...rez and John Byrne, showing ...at the title has long been con...dered a prestige book, although ...n the last couple of years the title ...as suffered in this regard, ...rhaps by the weak lineup which ...as been offered.

The annuals have had some ...ecial artists working on them. ...e most notable issues are #7 by ...m Starlin, which featured all of ...e major Avengers plus Adam ...arlock, #8 by George Perez, #9 by ...on Newton and #10 by Michael ...olden.

A couple of the more interesting ...engers sagas of the past few ...ears haven't even been real. *What ...?* *#3* featured "What If The Avengers Had Never Been?", co-plotted by Jim Shooter and the story's artist, Gil Kane. Capturing the feel of the Sixties Marvels, Kane's story postulated a different direction from the ending of *Avengers #2* in which the whole group split up this time rather than just having the Hulk quit. Iron Man then decides to take on the Hulk and Namor alone...and loses.

What If? #20 postulated a Kree/Skrull war without the key contribution made by Rick Jones in *Avengers #97*, while *What If? #25* had Thor and the Avengers taking on Asgard.

Later the Avengers lineup fell to such lesser lights as Starfox, the new Ms. Marvel, and worst of all, the She-Hulk. Issue #239 featured guest appearances by Hawkeye, Wonder Man, the Beast and the Black Panther which succeeded only in showing how weak the regular lineup with Captain America and the Vision being the only really interesting regular members.

The Avengers, because of its fluctuating lineup, has more potential for colorful stories than most any other book and this has been proven time and again. The real possibilities were further underscored when 1983's Annual #12 added Thor to brighten up the team and pump up the story. Like all books, it goes through changes and often seems neglected; but it remains the best book of its type next to the *Fantastic Four*, the *X-Men* and the *J.L.A.*

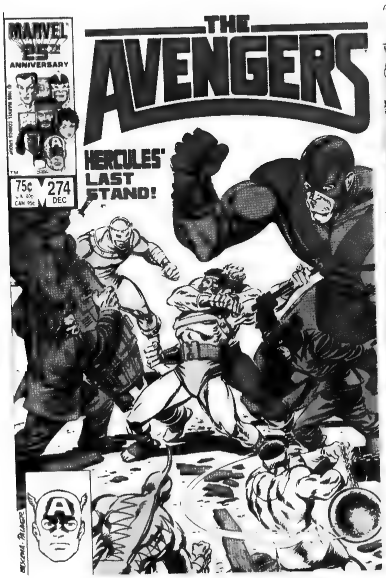
Certain interesting Avengers tie-ins have appeared over the years, the first being a regular novel written by Otto Binder and published in 1967, called *The Avengers Battle The Earth-Wrecker*. The lineup was Capt. America, Hawkeye, Quicksilver, the Scarlet Witch and Goliath. A year later an original Captain America novel, *The Great Gold Steal* by Ted White, was also published by Bantam books.

In 1979, Pocket Books published a whole series of Marvel superhero novels, including an Avengers novel by Jim Shooter and an Avengers novella which appeared in a collection of stories about the Hulk, the X-Men and Daredevil.

The Avengers remains an interesting book to watch, currently enjoying one of its strongest lineups, the excellent artwork of John Buscema and a run of good stories by Roger Stern. Its track records through the past three decades is an admirable one and it is certainly a title that bears continued reading.

I...I FIRST BECAME AWARE OF THE FEAR AS A CHILD. I'M THE 1950'S. WHEN MY PARENTS BUILT THE BLAST PENNED ON A FALLOUT SHELTER FOR THE NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST THEY TALKED OF EVERY DAY. B-BUT SHELTERS AND P.D.S. DIDN'T STOP THE COLD WAR -- OR THE "POLICE ACTIONS" IT'S ANYBODY BROUGHT ABOUT.
SFX!
AND TH... FREEDOM ... AND F...
--SPANNING THE DECADES WITH THE HORRORS OF ENERGY DEPLETION, MASS EVAPORATION, ESCALATING STREET CRIME... AND NOW, THE SINGLE GREATEST ACTIVATING FORCE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD IS FEAR. FEAR!

THE TEAMS


MARVEL
25½
ANNIVERSARY
75¢
274
DEC
THE AVENGERS
HERCULES' LAST STAND!

AVENGERS
12¢
62
MAR
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE MIGHTY AVENGERS
THE MONARCH AND THE MAN-APE!

The Avengers were to Marvel what the Justice League of America was to DC — a team book featuring the most popular superheroes that the company published. But while the JLA held a basic roster for dozens of issues and several years of existence, the Avengers lineup was in flux almost as one of the premises of the title.

The Hulk quit at the end of the second issue (in a scene reminiscent of The Human Torch quitting the Fantastic Four at the end of issue 3). but The Hulk never resolved his differences with the group, and in fact teamed up with the Sub-Mariner to do battle with them full force in issue 3.

Issue 4 introduced Captain America not only to The Avengers lineup but to Marvel Comics as a whole, having hibernated through the Atlas Comics of the Fifties.

A problem which plagued the title in its early issues was that Thor, who was the most responsible for defeating Loki in issue one, dominated things just by means of his enormous powers. While Superman never took center stage in the JLA, Thor and The Avengers tended to encounter foes that Thor could handle single-handed without the help of Ant Man, Captain America or even Iron Man. This resulted in the first wholesale shakeup of the lineup in issue 16 when Thor and Iron Man left and Cap headed a team consisting of secondary, and certainly less colorful heroes, such as Quicksilver, The Scarlet Witch and Hawkeye. As Fred Hembeck once put it in a cartoon, "It's to Captain America's credit that he won any battles at all alongside this trepid trio!"

Instead of being like the JLA where you could count on certain heavyweight heroes having some bizarre adventure or other each issue, plots as often as not had to do with the comings and goings of heroes, as though The Avengers had a revolving door for their constantly revolving roster of characters.

Issue 20 introduces the Swordsman, who joined The Avengers only to betray them. He later reformed and joined the team once more, but that was much later.

In issue 22, Captain America took the revolving door but he was back in the following issue.

Goliath and The Wasp return to The Avengers in issue 28, which begins the long, twisted saga of Goliath/Yellowjacket/Ant Man/Hank Pym which is still unfolding even as we speak in the pages of **The West Coast Avengers.** If any hero has ever had a tougher row to hoe than Hank Pym, I don't know who it could be. As Goliath his powers quickly became limited so that he could only grow to 10 feet. His costume when he returned to the Avengers was also different from the one he had when he left.

Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch leave in issue 30, although for some fans it wasn't soon enough. This left Captain America, Hawkeye, Goliath and The Wasp. But Quicksilver and The Witch return in issue 36.

Then things start getting crowded as both The Black Widow and Hercules start turning up and Herc even becomes a member in issue 45.

Captain America takes another walk in issue 47 just as the new version of The Black Knight is introduced.

Quicksilver and The Witch leave again in issue 49 while Goliath loses his goliath powers. But in issue 51 Goliath regains his powers, along with a new costume. Thor and Iron Man put in an appearance in this issue as well.

The Black Panther becomes an Avenger in issue 52, having proven to be very popular after Jack Kirby created him in the pages of **The Fantastic Four.**

The character destined to become one of the most popular Avengers is introduced in "Behold, The Vision!" in a story written by Roy Thomas for issue 57.

Thor, Iron Man and Captain America are on the roster for issue 58, in which the Vision becomes an Avenger.

Yellowjacket comes on the scene in issue 59 when Hank Pym discards the Goliath identity for this new look. While Ant Man and Giant Man all appeared in series of their own at one time or another, Yellowjacket never captured the imagination enough to manage that feat. Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne (The Wasp) wed in issue 60 and leave on their honeymoon. They return in issue 63 when Hawkeye tires of shooting arrows and adopts the identity of Goliath, with yet another new costume.

In issue 66, The Black Panther takes a leave of absence while Thor and Iron Man return to add some color to the lineup. This July 1969 issue also publishes a letter by one James Van Hise!

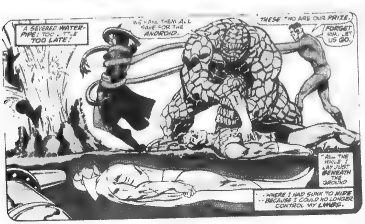
The Black Panther returns in issue 68 and the roster is pretty interesting now, what with Thor, Iron Man, the Panther, Goliath, Yellowjacket, The Vision and The Wasp.

The new Black Knight joins the team in issue 71 just in time to leave it in 72 along with Thor, Iron Man and The Black Panther, but the Panther returns in issue 73 so that Captain America can leave! But Cap isn't gone long and is back by issue 75 when Quicksilver turns up to reveal a menace to Earth that has captured his sister, The Scarlet Witch.

Some Avengers tend to turn up when you least expect it, such as in issue 76 when Thor and Iron Man, who haven't been seen for a couple issues, miraculously show up midway through the story, with no introduction, other than in some dialogue explaining how they managed to be there in the middle of things when no one had even referred to them before in that issue! But that's okay, because they're absent again the following issue, along with Cap.

This really makes one long for the simpler stories like the JLA & JSA where there'd be a role call and we'd know that someone wasn't able to make such and such a meeting. But The Avengers don't just gather for meetings, they seem to always be getting together when a menace appears

THUS, AS OUR STALWART SEXTET DISEMBARK...
LOOK OUT! A BUNCH OF ROBOTS!
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!
TIME TO SHOUT...
WATCH OUT FOR THOSE CHEST-BLASTERS!
THAT'S ONES BARTON, DISCARDED!
KEEP BACK, BARTON...
I'M SO SANDERSON-PANTHER
I'LL GOT ME A NEW HAIRCUT TO DO!


A SILVERY WATER-PHANTOM! TOO LATE!
WE'VE THEM ALL NOW--OR THE ANDROID...
"THESE" WHO ARE OUR PRIZE.
I FORGET! LET'S GO.
ALL THE WORLD SEEMS BENEATH ME SUDDENLY...
...WHERE I HAD GONE TO AVOID --BECAUSE I COULD NO LONGER CONTROL MY LANGER--

A galaxy spanning epic as the Avengers take on the Kree, the Skrulls and anyone else in sight.

FOUR SUNS... FIVE SUNS... SIX SUNS... LIFE... DEATH... AND THE VOID... AND THE VEER...
NO TRUMPETS WAKE THEM TO BATTLE... NO SILVERIEST SOUND ECHOES IN THE HUSH-HALLOW OF SPACE...
YET TOLL-HEARD... NEEDING NO SOUND OR WORDS OR BOOMING OF DRUMS...

PERHAPS THE SOUL OF ARGUS WALTER FIGHTS ON TO ALL-NOTHING ODIN AS HE SURGES BACK THE CONCEPT OF HIS ONE-MAN FORCE...
IT IS...YEA, NOT FOR A COSMIC EON... ALL WORDS ARE SWALLOWED UP IN THE...VERSE-HERE OF NOTHINGNESS...

or between adventures in their own titles.

Cap is back in issue 78 and Thor and Iron Man are back in 79. But Thor, Cap and Ol' Shellhead leave again in issue 83! This is becoming maddening! Hold on, it's not nearly over.

The Black Knight and Thor return in issue 84 but the Knight leaves again in 85. Then Iron Man joins in the fray once more in issue 86. Then in 88, Thor, Captain America, Iron Man and Goliath leave!

Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch are back in 89 and Goliath, Wasp and Yellowjacket return in 90, but the latter two leave again at the conclusion of 91.

Instead of leaving, four of The Avengers: Goliath, The Vision, The Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver are kicked out by Captain America, Thor and Iron Man in 92 for shielding Captain Marvel from a government investigation.

But it was a trick! It was really Skrulls impersonating the founding members (plus Cap) of The Avengers, as revealed in issue 93 when Ant Man (Hank Pym, the man of many faces) appears in a brief but very memorable segment of the story. The real Cap, Thor and Iron Man are on hand as well. These Kree/Skrull war issues show how interesting the stories are when Thor, Iron Man and Cap are around to battle together.

Issue 98 features the return of Hercules as well as Clint Barton ditching the Goliath identity to return to his Hawkeye guise.

The all star hundreth issue features the then regular team of The Vision, Quicksilver, Thor, Iron Man, The Scarlet Witch, Captain America and Hawkeye aided by The Black Knight, Hulk, Ant-Man, The Wasp, Hercules, The Black Panther and The Swordsman (now reformed).

Quicksilver vanishes in issue 104 while Cap leaves again in 105 while The Panther returns to the ranks. Then Cap returns in 106 and Thor leaves! But Thor returns in issue 108 only to see Cap and Hawkeye leave in 109.

Quicksilver returns in 110 only to quit, but that's okay because now Cap is back.

The Black Widow becomes a member in 111 while Daredevil (who had guest starred in 82) turns down the offer to be a member.

The Swordsman makes an appearance in issue 112, as does a new character, Mantis.

Things hold pretty steady until 12 when Cap and The Panther take leave But both reappear in the following issue, although Cap doesn't officially rejoin the ranks until 125. But Cap an The Panther leave again at the cor clusion of 126 (You think maybe there' something going on there?)

The Swordsman is killed in battle i **Giant-Size Avengers** 2 and his funeral i held in **Avengers** 130.

Did you know that Iron Man onc died? It happens in **Avengers** 132 in battle against Kang and the Legion o the Unliving. But that's just the lead t to **Giant-Size Avengers** 3 where Iron Man returned to life, and the team lineup.

The lineup in issue 137 include Thor, Iron Man, Yellowjacket, The Was and Moondragon, as well as a former Man who was quite a popular Aveng for a while — the furry version (and t one many fans still prefer) of T Beast!

When I started this article, my inte tion was to explore the differe lineups and how differently they fur tion, but while one could certainly that with the JLA and produce some

teresting insights, The Avengers never had a lineup long enough to refer to it as being firmly in place for any length of time at all!

Odd characters would periodically join the lineup, such as Patsy Walker (who had a comic in the early Sixties in which the character was a fashion model) who becomes the superhero Hellcat and joins The Avengers in issue 144.

But Hellcat and Moondragon are not in issues 145 & 146 — not because they've quit in a snit or gone off in search of The Black Knight (such as Hawkeye did in 137), but because they're fill-in issues and the story begun in 144 doesn't continue until issue 147, where the continuity is picked up and Hellcat and Moondragon are back. That's life in the big city.

Another "official" new lineup is introduced in 151, meaning that members may come and go but certain ones will remain consistent, at least for a awhile. The lineup consists of The Vision, The Scarlet Witch, The Beast, Iron Man, Captain America, The Wasp and Yellowjacket.

Wonder Man is revived in 152, goes through some changes (he had been dead, you know, since 9), becomes a zombie, and then gets better and becomes an Avenger in issue 154. He's been a pretty popular Avenger ever since.

Thor and The Black Panther return to the lineup in issue 159. Thor has a tendency to wander in and out of The Avengers, depending on the demands of Asgard and his title's current writer.

In issue 160, Captain America, The Wasp, Yellowjacket, Iron Man and Thor leave. Like I said.

Hank Pym returns to his Ant Man identity (again) in issue 161, as well as to the Avengers lineup. Also back are

ROY THOMAS and NEAL ADAMS reached one of the highest points in the history of the Avengers with the epic storyline that involved almost everyone in the Marvel Universe in an interstellar war to end all comic book wars!

REACH OUT, ARCHES GRASP MY HAND!
GOT YOU!?
STRAIN YOUR MUSCLES, YAH TO THE BREAKING POINT!!
BUT HE STILL DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT A 2-1/2 - WHO MIGHT BURN UP THE WORLD!!
INCREDIBLE! I HAD CALCULATED ENOUGH TO DESTROY AN ARMORED TANK!
AS YOU NOW LEARN THE TRUE SORROW!
BUT HAWKEYE IS HURT!
BENEATH HIS BREAST!

Captain America, Iron Man and The Wasp.

Thor returns in issue 162, which also features the intro of Jocasta, an android being created by Ultron but which turns out to be good while he/it is evil.

Due to injuries suffered in the battle with Ultron, only Iron Man and The Beast are featured in issue 163.

Iron Man leaves in 164 while Captain America and The Scarlet Witch return to active duty. But Iron Man returns (along with Thor!) in 165.

Only Captain America, Iron Man and The Black Panther appear in issue 169 because it's a fill-in issue. Issue 170 actually continues the storyline from 168, and The Wasp and Yellowjacket return (it's bye-bye Ant Man again).

Jocasta becomes a regular in the Avengers in 171, while Captain America disappears only to return in 174.

The Vision does his disappearing act in 172, but also returns in 174.

The Black Panther, The Black Widow and Captian Marvel begin hanging around in 173 and don't leave until 181.

The Beast goes it solo in 178, and a good time is had by all.

Another new lineup is instituted in 181, this one due to government regulations due to too many people having the top security Avengers Priority clearance. The new lineup consists of Captain America, Iron Man, The Vision, The Scarlet Witch, The Beast, The Wasp and The Falcon (The government makes sure that superhero minorities are represented properly!). A whole parcel of characters who'd been visiting or just hanging around now exit, including The Guardians of the Galaxy and a highly offended Hawkeye.

Iron Man leaves in 185 and returns in 189, but 189 is primarily a Hawkeye solo story — and he's not even an official Avenger any more!

Wonder Man has a knack for feeling like a fifth wheel, a failure, etc, even though Hank Pym has ten problems for every one that Wonder Man has. But Wonder Man walks out in issue 190. But he's back in the following issue, in which The Scarlet Witch leaves.

The Falcon leaves in 194 while Wonder Man is made an official member and feels a lot better about himself as a semi-human being and a superhero.

Yellowjacket returns in 195 — and so does Ant Man, but they're two different people! Hank Pym is Yellowjacket while Scott Lang becomes the new Ant-Man.

While Jocasta has been a part of The Avengers family for awhile, she doesn't officially become a member until issue 196.

Thor returns in issue 200, but what would an Avengers anniversary issue be without Thor, one of the founding members.

The Beast and Wonder Man have an issue to themselves in 203, "Night Of The Crawlers!" (January, 1981).

Thor returns (again) in issue 210. He'd slipped out the back when no one was looking and faster than you can say "For Asgard!" he was outta' there!

Guess what? Issue 211 introduces another "official" lineup. This time it's Bill's see if I can get this all out in just one breath): Thor, Captain America, Iron Man, Yellowjacket, The Wasp, The Vision, The Scarlet Witch, Hercules, The Beast, Tigra, The Angel, Jocasta, Wonder Man, Hawkeye, The Black Widow, The Black Panther, Ice Man, The Dazzler, Moon Knight and Moon Dragon! Phew! But don't think they'll all be around for long!

Yellowjacket starts his downward slide when he's court-martialed in 213, strikes his wife, The Wasp, in 214, and the two split up (and later divorce, leading to the wretched Hank Pym currently trying to turn his life around in **The West Coast Avengers**). Yellowjacket hits bottom in 217 when he's tricked into helping the villainous Egghead and winds up behind bars! And you think you've got problems!

The Avengers lineup has, if anything fluctuated even more since then, at one point consisting of The Vision, the new Captain Marvel, Captain America, The She-Hulk, The Wasp, The Scarlet Witch and Starfox (another new character, this one from the old Warlock stories).

Hawkeye, The Beast, Wonder Man and The Black Panther are on hand in issue 239 just in time to appear on **Late Night With David Letterman!**

When Roger Stern took over writing The Avengers he settled on a very interesting lineup consisting of Captain America, The Sub-Mariner (now there's a first!), Hercules, Captain Marvel, The Black Knight and the team leader, Wasp. With Hercules practically beaten to death in issue 274, Thor will be stepping in to fill his spot and Namor will finally be returning in a few months as well.

These days the team is not fluctuating as maniacally as it used to and with John Buscema and Tom Palmer handling the art the book has been in tip-top shape for almost two years now. The team has been both balanced and interesting as Namor has certainly contributed both strength and color to the crew, as well as a certain unpredictability as he has never been a team player before, and is not one to take orders easily. After all, when one has been the ruler of a kingdom, one is not used to being dictated to.

If anything, the current lineup of the Avengers is one of the most interesting since its first dozen issues and it bears watching. As teams go, the title is now much better than average.

1981
A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF

MARVEL
THE AVENGERS
ON LATE NIGHT WITH DAVID LETTERMAN!
60¢
239
JAN
...AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE MORE FUN THAN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE!

1981 has been a good year for *AVENGERS* fans—at least for those fans who:

(1) wanted to see David Michelinie leave the book.

(2) preferred to see Gene Colan and George Perez working at DC rather than chronicling the exploits of Earth's Mightiest Super-Heroes.

(3) felt that Bob Hall, Alan Kupperberg, and Alan Weiss were adequate replacements for the above.

(4) were of the opinion that it was time for some wholesale housecleaning—purging from the ranks of the Assemblers such lightweights as the Vision, the Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, and the Beast, and replacing them with a character claiming to be Tigra the Werewoman.

(5) thought it high time that Hapless Hank Pym showed his true colors as borderline psychotic and full-time loser.

On the other hand, it hasn't been much of a year for those who didn't want to see the team turned into a collection of characters who bore little resemblance to the *mighty* Avengers during their days of glory. The post-#200 issues of *THE AVENGERS* have been about as much fun to such fans as having the Red Skull perform root canal work sans anasthesia.

Strong words, true, but based upon strong exception being taken to the "new direction" being mapped out for the book by current writer Jim Shooter. Granted the man's not *intentionally* torpedo-ing one of Marvel's longest-running, most popular titles, one can only assume that he think he's accomplishing something new, different, and good. Well, it *is* new. And it's certainly different.

It all started going wrong with the double-sized "special anniversary issue" #200, which—being both beyond the time frame of this review and already thoroughly analyzed, criticized, and demolished by (among others) Carol Strickland in *LOC #1*—need not be dwelled upon overlong at this time. Still, one might speculate that this offending and offensive "epic" built up so much bad karma that, despite Chris Claremont's efforts (in *AVENGERS ANNUAL #10*) to mitigate the damage somewhat, the book is still working it off. Even in compensation for that abomination, though, we the readers are quickly reaching the point of being subjected to cruel and unusual punishment.

To be fair, though, it must be said that *AVENGERS #201-215* have not been totally devoid of redeeming features. Issues #201 and #202 did offer the twin virtues of featuring the first solo story of that battling butler, the Impeccable Jarvis, and adapting Jim Shooter's prose "*Avengers*" story done for the Marvel novel series of a couple of years past. The former was long overdue, and, while basically unmemorable, did do justice to the book's longest-lived regular (longest-lived in terms of uninterrupted service, at least). As a matter of fact, Jarvis has come closest to maintaining some semblance of dignity and continuity of character during Shooter's second stewardship on the book.

The adaptation of the prose story was only semi-satisfactory, merely *good* when, given the quality of the source material, the final appearance of George Perez as penciller of the book, and the presence of ace Avenger villain Ultron, it could have been great. A little less than two full issues were just not enough to do full justice to Shooter's original story, and the relative brevity of the adaptation is especially puzzling since there was precious little immediately following it that anyone should have been in a hurry to get on to. (If nothing else, the above opinions should defend me from charges of being a knee-jerk Shooter-hater who would rake the guy over the coals even if he produced the comic-book equivalent of *WAR AND PEACE*.)

Unfortunately, *THE AVENGERS* went nearly entirely downhill almost immediately after issues #201 and #202. Perez and Michelinie were gone, resulting in a series of rather lackluster fill-ins while the book awaited the assumption of control by the projected new team of Bill Mantlo and Gene Colan.

Issue #203 offered an off-beat tale starring Wonder Man and the Beast, and was primarily of interest due to the presence of master stylist Carmine Infantino as penciller. Just as Perez had concluded his Marvel career with the previous issues, so too did Carmine make

WHERE ARE THOSE INTRUDERS?
I HEAR SOMETHING AT THE DOOR!
YAAA!!
WHAM
CRASH
CRASH
BANG
BANG
BANG

IT WILL BE OUR LAST!
I'M MORNING! IT IS WHEN I FEEL MY STRENGTH FLOWED BACK! I UPGRADE!!
BUT... THE SIDE-WALLS GET ALL CLOSER...
CLOSER...!
I'LL MEDITATE AND GATHER MY ENERGIES! I'LL HAVE A CHANCE!
THEN, ALL IN THE NEXT HEART-STOPPING MOMENT, THE TWO MUTILATED AVENGERS ARE FREE... AND A TERRIFIC FIGHT APPEARS SEEMINGLY OUT OF NOWHERE AS THE ONE-TIME ENEMIES SUDDENLY SHATTER NO LONGER!
VISION!
AS SHE LIT OFF, THE VISION, SAVED US BOTH!
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE WATCHING THE MONITORS! I GHOST RIDERS HAVE TURN ME OUT! KILL!
BOUND IT, THE BOUND ITCH!
I'LL SLIPPERY WORK WHAT'S THAT?
HE WAS SLED ABOVE THE MOON AND HURLED BACK TO EARTH!
MAN APE!

WHILE A FEW MONTHS AROUND BENEATH A SILVER MOON...
GOLIATH! IT MAY BE MY SPHERE OF ENERGY!
HEY, WHO'S IT YOU'RE TALKING TO?
WHAT KNOW, HUMAN?
BE-ZOK! RABBIT PUNCH!
PTOK!
ARRRHH!
THE GIANT ONE HAS FALLEN IN BATTLE!
AND MY CHIEF MUST NOT FALL INTO THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES!
KISAMO TO YOU, TOO!
I CAN WALK!
THWANG!
WELL DONE, KISAMO!
I'LL TAKE YOU TO A PLACE OF REFUGE!
YEEFOW!
BKONY!

four soon-to-be ex-Avengers, Vision, Scarlet Witch, Wonder Man, and (especially) the Beast. The story, structurally similar to DeMatteis' first effort on the Defenders in issue #92 of their book (as well as any number of old *"JLA"* stories), did at least offer the return of the ever-delightful Vera from the pages of the original *X-MEN*, though the probability of further reappearances by Hank McCoy's old girl-friend appeared bleak at story's end.

I had hoped that *"The Wrath of the Weathermen"* in issue #210 would pit our heroes against hordes of irate meterologists out to get Thor (who was returning to active Avengering with this issue after sitting out the action since issue #202) for ruining so many of their forecasts. No such luck, though. Instead, the Avengers ran afoul of a HAL-like rogue computer by the unwieldy name of Lemar-oleryn and his (its) human pawns.

In keeping with the nature of the villain, the story was played out rather mechanically and predictably—at least until the last panel wherein Captain America announced that it was time once again to proclaim that "the Old Order Changeth."

Actually though, Cap was merely acting as spokesman for the guy really doing the changing, Jim Shooter. Yep, the Big Boss had decided that he rather than Bill Mantlo should take the reins of the book so he could follow through on his avowed intention of turning the book back into what he said it should have essentially always been—a team dominated by the heavy artillery of the Marvel Universe; "Your Favorite Heroes Together." Or something like that.

As these words are being written, we are but five issues into the Shooter Regime, and it is simply too early to fully judge the impact of what Shooter has done—and will do—on and to the book. No major plot threads have as yet been carried through to fruition, nor have rational explanations been offered for some of the more irrational actions of a number of characters. What Shooter has in mind as the ultimate pay-off for all the things he has set in motion can only be speculated upon at the present time. What *he* thinks he's accomplishing I can't really say; what *I* think he's accomplishing (though I would gladly be proven wrong in this) is the needless ruination of one of comicdom's premier books.

If nothing else, Shooter hit the ground running with issue #211, taking but one issue to rid the book of a quartet of full-time Avengers, plus one semi-Avenger (Jocasta); add one new Avenger (Tigra) and one old Avenger (Yellowjacket) to (supposedly) replace them; guest-star a

number of inactive Avengers (Hawkeye, Black Panther, Black Window, Hercules, and the ever-insufferable Moondragon [who showed once again why she is the hands-down winner of the Howard Cossell Humility and Congeniality Award]) and non-Avengers (Dazzler, Moon Knight, Iceman, and the Angel), *and* divest Marvel of one of its artistic mainstays, Gene Colan.

This is not the place for a eulogy to Gentleman Gene's Marvel career, so let us concentrate on the internal action of the issue.

It was inexplicable, to say the least. Either Moondragon for as-yet-unexplained reasons of her own manipulated the participants a lot more than they yet realize, or Cap really did start acting like a little tin god: "As current chairman, I'm invoking my right to limit our number. [*What* right??] Only six of us can stay! [Why not five? Or seven?] The rest go! [And good riddance, ya wimps]", and the rest of the group really did go along with his ill-motivated fiat. How else can one explain the reasoning behind the departure of the Vision and the others?

Actually, a rather strong rationale can be extrapolated from the events depicted in *AVENGERS ANNUAL #10*, had that issue merely appeared before this one. But more on that later.) How else can one explain Tigra's decision to ask to join the group, and the willingness of the remaining Assembler to let this *extremely* unknown quantity into the team?

I fervently hope that Shooter intends to explain what really happened in *AVENGERS #211* in the not-too distant future. If not, then this issue will be able to take its rightful place next to the "membership madness" issues of *THE DEFENDERS (#62-64)* as prime examples of almost total jettisoning of believable characterization for the sake a single story.

In the meantime, Shooter had indeed managed to reshape the line-up to conform with his vision (no pun intended) of "what it should be"—one dominated by established solo stars. From published reports, it appears that—at least to Shooter's mind—this concept had been lost as "lesser" characters joined the ranks and shunted the more established stars aside. He apparently must then feel that the book has been living on borrowed time since issue #16, since the first fifteen were the *only* issues to feature a line-up primarily composed of characters who were simultaneously holding down their own solo careers. Clearly this initial "purpose" of the book had been modified if not totally abandoned over the years, the reasons doubtless being that greater character development and meaningful progress in the lives of the team were only possible when the spotlight was shifted to characters who were not constrained by what was going on in their own strips (which were generally written by other writers).

Certainly the Avengers have thrived on change, and I for one have had no aversion to rather frequent and significant alterations in the active roster, but neither careful analysis of the history of the book nor any apparent weakness in current sales would seem to offer sufficient justifications for the changes Shooter initiated. If he wanted to get the Avengers back to where they belonged," it was and is strictly one man's opinion which supported the changes made. Of course even that man is Editor-in-Chief, that is more than enough to back the moves. Whether or not that is enough to ensure that the changes *work* is another question.

Be that as it may, it seems that if it's Shooter's opinion that Hank Pym is basically a weak, unstable personality ("a haunted, hollow man" as that noted master of psychoanalysis Tony Stark soliloquized in issue #213's "*Court Martial*") whose one lasting accomplishment of any real scientific note was the creation of Ultron, well then, by God that's the way Hank is going to be handled! And if that's the way Dr. Pym is going to act, then he's certainly no longer worthy of the love and compassion of the Wasp, who tells him in no uncertain terms to buzz off (in issue #214): "For years I've cared for you, clinging to you and worshipping you to support your fragile ego! I submerged myself completely to prop you up! No more! Never again! Now, please leave!"

Now some may see this as a compelling, realistic depiction of the break-up of a marriage. I see it as the radical alteration of two major Marvel characters, and the utter ruination of one of them. Hank Pym is not a "haunted, hollow man" supported only by the sympathy of family and friends, and unable to carry his own weight as either a hero or a scientist. Sure, he came a cropper with Ultron, but he is also directly or indirectly responsible for the existence of such do-gooders as Ant-Man, Giant-Man, the Vision, Jocasta, and, oh yes, the wonderful Wasp. That's right, Jim; remember how Hank took a sprightly flighty eighteen-year-old heiress and created a super-heroine? All alone, with no help and with no complications? How does this cover all that Dr. Pym has accomplished; he's contributed more to the Marvel mythos than all but a handful of other characters.* True, his popularity was at best run hot and cold, but what's he done to merit this treatment?

Only Shooter knows. Is Yellowjacket being called upon to become Shooter's answer" to Dark Phoenix? Is this to be Jim's object lesson in how to turn a long time Marvel good guy into a no-looking-back baddie without falling into the overkill trap that shot down Claremont and Byrne's cosmic character? It certainly appears that way.

The problem is that it just doesn't work unless on (a) misreads, (b) ignores, or (c) just doesn't care about Henry Pym's career and life history, *and* one manipulates the other Avengers so that they (a) courtmartial Hank after one (albeit rather major) screw-up (with good old Cap once again throwing his weight around as prosecutor), and (b) are allowed to think the occasional compassionate thought about their troubled colleague, but shut off the milk of human kindness at just the right times to avoid actually helping him.

To accomplish the latter, the Avengers have had to ultimately "realize" (issue #214) that it is, after all, up to Hank to straighten out his own life; they'll be happy to lend support once he's gotten himself back under control anyway. This might be a fine approach were Hank fighting his conscience over some moral or ethical quandary of his own creation. But given Hank's admitted emotional and mental instability (which, despite Shooter's revisionist interpretation of Hank's career and personality, is certainly the result of *physical* strain brought about by Dr. Pym's efforts to make himself a more efficient crimefighter), the *laissez faire* attitude doesn't make much sense.

It ends up sounding like the Avengers, and through them Shooter, are advocating a Reaganomic approach to mental health—let the "market forces" of Hank's free will operate unobstructed, and by all means don't let "big brother" impose a solution from the outside. Instead of "finding Hank and helping him whether he realizes he needs it or not is our first mission as Avengers and as his friends," it's "well, he knows where we are. Let him find us if he wants to."

While I enjoy the Wasp greatly as a character, and admire the way Marvel writers—including Shooter himself—have improved both her powers and her personality over the past few years, I can't say I'm overwhelmed with admiration as to how *she's* handled the situation thus far. If we were to be brutally frank about it, her marriage is *founded* on Hank's fragile personality. Said problem first manifested itself in *AVENGERS #59-60*, wherein Hank went temporarily off the deep end, created his Yellowjacket *persona*, and married Janet Van Dyne while still unaware that he was, in fact, Henry (Goliath) Pym. The Wasp, on the other hand, was aware of the situation, and, using some questionable logic, rationalized the acceptability of getting Hank to the altar while the opportunity presented itself. After all, if he were in his right mind, how would she ever be able to convince Hank (still grieving over the death of his first wife, viz. *TALES TO ASTONISH #60*) to tie the knot? Should she then really be all that surprised and traumatized when the problem manifests itself again, but *this* time in a way that hurts her rather than helps her? Shouldn't she and the other Avengers instead have been better prepared to deal with the situation; indeed, shouldn't they have taken steps to assure that the situation would never arise? If Shooter insists on playing the game of turning heroes into villains, shouldn't he be sure that he's able to tell which is which? Is Hank villain or victim? Has Janet really propped Hank up for years, or has she exploited and taken advantage of him to satisfy her own wants and desires like the spoiled heiress she supposedly did *not* develop into? (I know this sounds like an indictment of Janet Pym, despite my disclaimer at the top of this paragraph. It isn't really. I'm just trying to point out the real can of worms that Shooter has opened up. Maybe he plans to explore this angle in the future. If not, then my argument is that he has *not* adequately handled the situation, because he's not dealt sufficiently with *all* the problems *he's* created.)

Whew, heavy stuff, eh? But on the lighter side, if I don't care for the way Shooter has handled the old Avengers, what about what he's done with the newest addition to the team, Tigra? She at least

*According to the Marvel Mythos, Henry Pym was solely responsible for (and is still the main authority on) the process through which living tissue can be shrunken and enlarged while still retaining full functional capacity. He is also responsible for a process by which to communicate with and command insects, a process to harness the human body's "bio-electric energy" into adrenalin-like "stinger" bursts, and a process through which functional insect-like characteristics can be simulated in human beings. He is—or was until *AVENGERS #213*—unquestionably the "finest living bio-chemist on [Marvel-] Earth."

has such a brief and insignificant personal history that any consistent handling of the character is likely to be an improvement, and stands very little chance of violating her previous profile. Well, all I can say is that if the first five issues are any indication, then Jarvis is demonstrating his usual impeccable good taste in being allergic to her. She's been at best extremely brash and thoughtless, and at worst downright obnoxious in her relationships with the fellow Assemblers, and uniformly inept in her efforts at super-doing. Still, five issues isn't very long, especially since the resolution of the Molecule Master story-line (unseen in these parts) seems likely to be the big make-or-break payoff for Tigra as an Avenger.

In talking about Shooter's issues to date, I've not spent much time discussing the actual plots or the artwork. That's because the latter has been no better than serviceable, while the former has merely been a necessary vehicle through which Shooter could conduct his character analysis, manipulations, and assassinations. Can anyone as yet really figure out what happened in issue #211? Does anyone really care about issue #212's Elfqueen or her late unlamented barbarian boyfriend Gorn? Was there a plot to issue #213 except for Shooter's plot to get Hank out of the team?

Issue #214 existed, as alluded to above, to allow Shooter to philosophize on the true nature of super-heroes and to expound upon his "self-help" idea for wayward heroes. But Shooter should receive credit for his solid indepth analysis of the character of Ghost Rider, and for stating clearly that in G.R. we have *no* hero under *any* acceptable definition of the term. Even so, the long arm of improbability which allowed G.R. to zero in on a car which just happened to contain within it Warren Worthington III as a symbol of all that he hates in society seems to me to reflect the fact that Shooter is not spending a lot of time at present worrying about plot mechanisms. Actions and events seem to exist merely to allow the author further opportunities to explore and develop characterization.

Is this necessarily bad? Of course not, so long as (1) said characterization is believable and reasonable given what has gone before, and (2) a balance is struck somewhere along the line which allows the Avengers to get on with the business of villain-smashing and world-saving for their own sakes rather than just as a backdrop to the existential *Angst* which permeates the book.

Judging by issue #215, the balance has not yet been satisfactorily struck. Molecule Man, sharing the characterization spotlight with Tigra, is quickly reduced to the status of buffoon courtesy of Alan Weiss' visual interpretation and Shooter's explanation of "what he's all about." Granted, the character was no great shakes to begin with, but the least he deserves is that Shooter get all his facts right before dealing with the poor guy's innermost thoughts. For instance, accuracy of characterization might have been better served had Shooter shown any indication that he *knew* he was dealing with the *son* of the original Molecule Man (viz. *MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #1*). Thus it wasn't *his* origin that we saw in *FANTASTIC FOUR #20*, nor do his ramblings about his middle-aged parents who hated him sound particularly likely under the circumstances.

Earlier mention was made of *AVENGERS ANNUAL #10*, and no review of events since *AVENGERS #200* would be complete without a discussion of it. Being published around the same time as *AVENGERS #213*, it served as a swan song of sorts for the pre-Shooter Avengers line-up as it featured Thor, Cap, Iron Man, Vision, Beast, Wonder Man, Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye, *and* the return of the erstwhile Ms. Marvel, Carol Danvers. Had it been published before issue #211, this Claremont/Michael Golden collaboration might have served as a convincing spring-board for the big membership shake-up, for the annual existed essentially for the purpose of mitigating some of the damage done in issue #200, as the now-powerless Ms. Marvel returned to the Avengers just long enough to tell them what she really thought of them, and how they failed her. A supposed triumph was revealed to be an utter screw-up.

Such an eye-opener about the Avengers' shortcomings and complacency might just have served as a convincing rationale for several members to start questioning their status. One can imagine the older, more experienced—more jaded if you will—members maintaining the need for the continuation of the team despite this defeat—a defeat for the Avengers a

WHAT'S GOING TO THEM!
WHATSA MATTER, HEROES... NEVER SEE A MAN WHO'S POWERING THE WORLD'S ONLY TURBINES BEFORE? WELL, YER GONNA REMEMBER IT!
'CAUSE I NEVER WANTED THIS... ALL I WANTED WAS TO GO AWAY, BE LEFT ALONE!
...BUT IF YOU WON'T LET GO WITHOUT A FIGHT, THEN I'LL GIVE YOU A FIGHT! AW, IT AIN'T GONNA STOP IT, THO! HARBOR RUNS RED-
BLOOD
NEXT ISSUE:
DEATH ON THE HUDSON!

people rather than for the Avengers as super-heroes. On the other hand, other members less sure of their individual lives beyond their status as Avengers might start worrying about the insularity of life inside Avengers Mansion, and wondering whether they might not need to expand their personal horizons.

Unfortunately, this must remain but idle speculation. *AVENGERS ANNUAL #10* came out two months too late to perform this function. It was left instead to Moondragon and editorial fiat to accomplish what *might* have developed logically and organically out of the events depicted in issue #200.

Above and beyond the might-have-beens, the annual did serve to introduce yet another of Claremont's growing list of extremely powerful female characters in the person of the evil mutant Rogue, and to write *finis* to the super-heroic career of Ms. Marvel. One hopes that Rogue (solo or in tandem with her fellow members of the New Brotherhood of Evil Mutants) does not prove to be too powerful to be utilized effectively. And one hopes that Carol Danvers, whose potential as a costumed character no one was ever quite able to fully tap, finds a new lease on life as a supporting character in *THE X-MEN*.

Yes, Ms. Marvel and a lot of other very good characters have departed the pages of the book over the past year-plus. So, too, have some very talented pencillers and one superior writer (Michelinie). But good characters still remain, and so too, though this may sound rather surprising after all I've said, does a very good writer. There's no question about Jim Shooter's talent as a writer—I just think he's made some *very bad* choices about the purpose and the direction of *THE AVENGERS*.

Hank Pym's situation is certainly fraught with dramatic potential, but I feel that potential can be best exploited by having Hank ultimately cured rather than have him form a permanent alliance with Egghead. The departed Avengers *are* gone; nothing is forever in this book, but Wanda and her hubby and the others should probably not be back for quite a while.

That leaves the super-heroes primarily resting on the sturdy shoulders of Cap, Goldilocks, and Shellhead. But there is relatively little meaningful character development which can be done with them in the pages of this book. Tigra doesn't seem to be up to carrying the personality load all by herself, so we will probably see guest stars like Ghost Rider, the Angel, and the Silver Surfer continue to pop up. Dazzler, Moon Knight, and Iceman all appeared briefly in issue #211, so they might be seen again in the immediate future, though none of them strike me as real Avengers material. I'd kinda like to see the new Ant-Man make the Avenging scene; talk about your potential for character interaction and conflict.

But then I don't write them; I just read 'em. I'd like to say that I'm perfectly happy to sit back and let Jim Shooter continue to deliver the goods, but instead I find myself wishing that we could just go back to around *AVENGERS #199* again and try and get it right this time. ●

ROGER STERN
STEVE ENGLEHART

The X-Men fight the good fight unseen, at the fringes of society. But the Avengers are our spearhead against adversity, a collective of powers gathered to accomplish the greatest good. These are Earth's mightiest heroes, forming the front line against alien invasions, criminal masterminds, evil secret organizations . . .

In the beginning, **The Avengers** of 1963 provided a meeting place for fans of Thor, Ant-Man, The Hulk and Iron Man. There fans of one hero could become readers of another. All of the heroes appearing in **The Avengers** premiere had their own series with the exception of The Hulk, who was temporarily out of work. Over the years the team has gone through such a turnover that rather than being a shill for series characters, it has often become a safe harbor for heroes who lack a series of their own. Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner lost his book some time ago and Hercules has never had more than a miniseries. Both are regular teammates in the current Avengers.

Today's Avengers has branched out into two groups, the traditional New York team based at Avengers Mansion and the new West Coast Avengers. Coordinated under editor Mark Gruenwald, **The Avengers** is written by Roger Stern (and drawn by the popular team of John Buscema and Tom Palmer) while the recently instituted **West Coast Avengers** is written by Steve Englehart who was a primary writer on the original title a decade ago.

THE EAST COAST AVENGERS

Stern views **The Avengers** as unique. With many group books around, the difference he sees is that the Avengers are truly an organization.

"It's a group of incredibly powerful people who have gotten together to handle threats that are beyond the scope of individual characters or normal peacekeeping forces," Stern explains. "I think that organization is really the key word because they've got a charter, by-laws, regular meetings, a place to meet—the works! The Fantastic Four is more informal. They have a corporation these days, but they're really a small family. The old X-Men and X-Factor now have the whole concept of a school set up to teach mutant outcasts how to get along in society.

"The Avengers is an organization made up of individuals—pretty strong-willed individuals who don't always agree on the best course of action, but they get together and interact for the common good. When they interact they take on some of the aspects of an extended family. You get arguments, hassles and friendships between some of them; between others there are animosities and romances. There is even a little bit of the schooling angle because they have training facilities. Captain America is there—the greatest trainer you could ever want. It's really a bunch of individual heroes coming together and making a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts."

Before Stern took over chronicling the exploits of one of Marvel's oldest superteams **The Avengers** was written by Jim Shooter. Increasing demands on the company's editor-in-chief's time (no doubt brought on by the creation of the two **Secret Wars** super-series) forced him to relinquish the reins of the book.

"Mark Gruenwald had become editor of **The Avengers** and I heard from him that they were going to be needing a new writer. I called Jim Shooter to tell him that I was interested. Shooter said, 'Whatever you do, don't kill Hank Pym—he's been through too much already!' He told me what he'd had in mind for the series and I incorporated a bit of that and took off from there. Things have sort of grown since."

The myriad dynamic characters often dictate the directions that stories will take, according to Stern.

"It's a cliche that books write themselves. Everyone's heard that and they go, 'That's baloney.' While it is an oversimplification, things happen in **The Avengers** that I never would have foreseen when I first started on the series.

"For example," Stern continues, "when I started the Old Guard had returned. Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, the Wasp . . . and of course She-Hulk and Hawkeye had joined. Then things started happening. For one thing, three of the characters had their own books and events in **Iron Man** and **Thor** necessitated them leaving **The Avengers**, at least for a time. I needed someone else to come in. Mark Gruenwald suggested Eros and Starfox. In the crossover that I did with John Byrne, we brought in the Vision and the Scarlet Witch. That was originally thought of as being a guest appearance. It grew into an entire storyline. As I was developing it, more and more things started coming together. It's something that can only happen when you have a congregation of very individual and distinct characters. The way they play off of each other will often send stories in directions that I hadn't anticipated."

DYNAMIC PERSONALITIES

The current lineup, which Stern hopes will remain stable for awhile, consists of Captain America, the Wasp, Captain Marvel, Hercules, the Black Knight and, perhaps most surprisingly, the Sub-Mariner.

"Namor will be staying in the group for a time at least. There will be a crossover coming up with Alpha Flight in the spring of '86. Bill Mantlo wants to do something involving Marina and the whole Atlantis situation. Even after that I hope to keep the Sub-Mariner in the Avengers. He's sort of the wild card in the group. Because he's someone with serious attitude problems, he doesn't get along with anyone really well. He can even rub Captain America, who is like an old war buddy of his, the wrong way. And Cap was instrumental in getting him into the Avengers!"

INTERVIEW

THERE IS LITTLE ANYONE IN THE "VICTORY" MALL — NOR IN THE OTHER AVENGERS HISTORY-TITLES, LIKELY, WHO CAN MATCH THE SHEER POWER OF THE SUB-MARINER!
WAIT! WHAT IS THAT?
I SHALL TEACH THEM TO SCORN THE WISDOM OF NAMOR, SON OF LEONARD AND FRANCES MCKENZIE!
HE'S DOWN!
I SHALL TEACH THEM TO SCORN THE WISDOM OF NAMOR, SON OF LEONARD AND FRANCES MCKENZIE!
HE GOT THE BETTER OF HURRY!
THUS I JOINTHE AVENGERS!
AT LAST!
AT HIM! WHERE IS HE?
THERE HE IS, MY BROTHER WALKS AMONG THE ROCKS!
HEY! HE'S LYING SO STILL! IS HE...?
DEATH? OF COURSE!
AND NOW THAT MY IMPERIAL RIVAL HAS SLAIN SUB-SEA I AM EMPEROR! AT ONE POINT HE HAD BEATEN US BOTH!
MAYBE ATMOSPHERIC PRESS. THE AVENGERS—IF THEY'RE AS GOOD AS THEY SAY THEY ARE!
WHO CARES. FISH-MAN'S NO MATCH FOR SUB-!
IRON MAN SAVING! I CAN RUN MORE BUT HERE I MUST BE BOND TO DUTY FOR IT IS MINE!
EVERYTHING'S SPINNING! GOTTA GET...
AAH-!
TINK!
AAH-!
SAHN!
IRON MAN HAS BEEN PIERCED BY ICICLES OF UNUSUAL STRENGTH! THIS MUST BE THE WINTER SOLDIER!
N-NOT FOR LONG! THEN I COME NOW!
IT CAN'T HELP—I KNOW CAN!

IRON MAN and the SUB-MARINER add a great deal of power to the Avengers.

What makes Namor unique is that for many years he was Marvel's favorite hero-villain.

"There are a lot of things that the Sub-Mariner used to do that he has come to terms with," Stern explains. "This is a guy who's led guerrilla raids on New York at least two or three times. He's exotic, not really like anyone who's ever been in the Avengers before. That makes him the spark for all the other characters to play off.

"In the third issue of **The Avengers**, he and the Hulk were doing their best to annihilate them! Now it's 'Geeze, this guy's an Avenger—how did that happen?' "

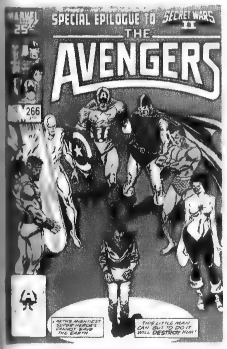
Stern views Namor as a character who has experienced wrenching changes throughout his life.

"He grew up in Atlantis, where he was stronger than anybody else. Undoubtedly, since he was royalty, some of the family there led him to believe that he was better than everybody else while he was growing up. I'm certain there must have been some Atlantean prejudice in there because he was a half-breed. He has a long history of thinking himself superior to other people; not getting along despite the fact that down deep he's a good guy. He's suffered from bad press, at least half of which he's brought on himself. Namor has got to start to grow up a bit. He's been around a lon time and he's never really acted all th responsibly. Now he's going to have som responsibility drummed into him."

Since Namor is not appearing in an i dividual series of his own, Stern is th principal writer of the character. He co trols the Sub-Mariner's destiny. "Gee, th sounds important," Stern laughs. "Most the time I try to keep him out of fights wi Hercules!"

SUPER TEAMWORK

In the past, leadership of the Avenge has fallen to Iron Man and Captain Ameri



Now there's an Avengers team on each coast to keep fans happy.

Things have changed. The choice of the present leader is especially surprising in light of such powerhouse members as Hercules and Namor.

"The Wasp is the leader," states Stern, and that has put her though a lot of changes because she used to be the etiquette of the super-hero world. She was the youngest, and probably one of those people whom no one took seriously when she was a girl. She played to that. She got her little flirt act down solid as sort of her little joke on the world because down deep she's pretty tough when the chips are down. In the very first story with the Wasp, her father had been killed. Henry Pym (then the Ant Man) was very impressed because she picked herself up and said, 'I don't know what it takes, but I'll find some way to avenge him.'" What better person to lead The Avengers?

"Since she's the leader of the group, she's had to move away from the flirt act and lay down the law and make it stick to this motley crew of heroes. There was also the divorce she had to go through and a lot of sticky circumstances. These characters are going through a maturation process that from the circumstances they're involved with."

Avengers headquarters serves as the residence for some members and a stopping off place for others. "Right now, only the Black Knight, Hercules and the Sub-Mariner reside at the mansion," Stern reveals. "Captain America is giving up his apartment in Brooklyn Heights. He'll have a room in the Avengers Mansion and be gone on the road a lot due to circumstances in his own book. He'll be sleeping over at the mansion from time to time but not actually residing there.

"The Wasp has her own property in New Jersey and probably a penthouse someplace in Manhattan as well. Captain Marvel lives in New Orleans. That's the great thing about being able to travel at the speed of light—you can live anywhere. It's a fast commute."

Some of the Avengers have always been a lot more super than others. In some cases, it has made the others seem as though they were just window dressing, with the burden carried by the more powerful members. But that's not the way that writer Stern views his characters.

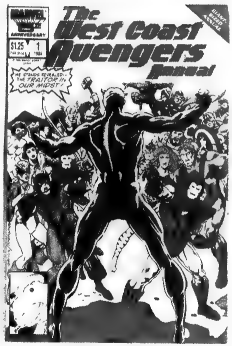
"At times it would seem that way but it's not always the case. In issue 266, which is an epilogue to the whole **Secret Wars II** series, it has the Avengers, the Fantastic Four and the Silver Surfer trying to fix a giant portion of the Rockies which has been obliterated by something that The Beyonder did before he left. There's a big hole—we're talking something that makes the Grand Canyon look like a chuckhole—and Hercules figures to just pick up big rocks and fill the hole in. Sub-Mariner gives Hercules a hard time, saying that there's a lot of strong guys here, but strength isn't going to do any good in a situation like this. That's an example. There are situations where overall strength just won't do. Plus you have the fact that Hercules is one of the great direct thinkers of our time, or non-thinkers, as the case may be.

"Sub-Mariner has a different kind of ego, but it's just as strong. There are times when just going in and punching something out isn't going to be the solution. You've got to have a plan; you've got to work together as a team and take advantage of all the powers and abilities. It's like that old thing where if you've got Thor in the group, why do you need everybody else? While that's true in certain cases," Stern admits, "in other situations it may not be an advantage to have Thor. I recall an early issue where having Thor around was a definite minus. The Enchantress had made Thor think that the other Avengers had turned bad, so they spent most of the issue trying to stay alive!"

THE GENESIS OF THE X-FACTOR!

While it may seem that **The Avengers** tie-in with the **X-Factor** was just used for convenience, it's something quite the contrary. Rather it's because Roger Stern helped conceive the idea which would later widen Bob Layton's concept of the new series.

"It's a long, involved story," Stern



begins. "It starts a couple of years ago when I was having a discussion with Kurt Busiek, an assistant editor at Marvel. We were playing the old game of what you'd do if you wrote this or that title. He said, 'If I were doing the **X-Men**, I'd bring back Jean Grey.' I said, 'Oh no, not the Phoenix again'. I'd had it up to here with the Phoenix. But he said, 'No, not the Phoenix. Jean Grey. Jean Grey never was the Phoenix. She's still down at the bottom of the river there someplace.' We talked about it, had a good chuckle and knew that we'd probably never write the **X-Men**. But it was fun to speculate on! One time I mentioned all this in passing to John Byrne and he thought it was a great idea. He mentioned the idea to Chris Claremont one time but Chris wasn't interested in bringing back Jean Grey—just Phoenix."

Time passes. Shot of leaves blowing past, snow falling, pages flying off the calendar. Then we're there.

"Then Bob Layton came up with the idea for X-Factor," Stern continues. "I was sitting around talking to Bob and told him that I had a story idea that he might want to use somewhere down the line, but I didn't want to tell him what it was just yet. About a week later he was having lunch with John Byrne and Bob told him that I had an idea for X-Factor that I wouldn't tell him. John said, 'Well I'll tell you what it is!' The next thing I knew I got three phone calls in a row from Bob saying that it was a great idea. I explained that it wasn't all my idea, but he said, 'I don't care! It's still a great idea! I'm throwing out the opening story I Had for X-Factor and we'll incorporate this into it!' So Bob called together a big meeting. I flew into the city and Bob was there with John Byrne in Jim Shooter's office. We spent hours formulating all the possibilities. Out of that grew the crossovers into the **Avengers, The Fantastic Four** and the first issue of **X-Factor.**"

AND NOW. . . THE WEST COAST AVENGERS!

Since The Avengers operate under bylaws, they have a size limit which restricts them to no more than six members. Before that rule was instituted, the team often swelled to a dozen members. . . and at times even more. But now each group of Avengers operates at the six member limit.

The West Coast Avengers current membership consists of Hawkeye, Mockingbird, Iron Man, Wonder Man and Tigra with the sixth member yet to be decided. On an informal basis, both the Thing and Firebird are, as writer Steve Englehart puts it, "Hanging out with them." Hank Pym (formerly known as Ant Man-Giant Man-Goliath-and Yellow Jacket) is on hand as the group's general manager.

The lineup for **The West Coast Aven** was arrived at before Steve Englehart ca on line as author. "I know that editor M Gruenwald has great affection Hawkeye and Mockingbird and that th was a desire to have a balance of mu and females, a balance of power and forth," states Englehart.

"The characters which are appea only in this title are mine to work w That's always been true with the Aveng set up," Englehart explains. "Charac that appear in their own titles are province of the writer who handles th series. The only thing you can do is ex plify the situation being done in their ba In my stint on the east coast Avenge tried to play up the fact that Iron Man Captain America were good friends; sort of thing. But it was not really my pl as a team book writer to start making things for Iron Man. The ones that are in the **Avengers** are totally mine. t become the focal point of the book."

Just as Stern is lining up Kang and tling on who and what he is, Englehar unraveling Tigra.

"My feeling when I took over the b was that it had a lot of potential," Englel explains. "Over the years, both Tigra Wonder Man have acquired a lot negative baggage. There were perio where those people would join Avengers and stand around for six issu

MARVEL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
THE
AVENGERS
75¢
U.K. 40p
CAN. 95¢
268
JUNE

not really fitting into the book. Or worse, they'd say, 'We're no good as Avengers' and leave. Since that happened to both of them several times they became locked into people's perceptions as spectacular failures. But they have the potential to be really good characters.

"There may be a number of reasons why Tigra never really knocked the world dead. One thing that I can do when I come in is say that none of that happened; we'll start over. The first thing is to rehabilitate them and make them live up to their potential. I set out to look into Tigra and see what made her interesting and present a new origin for her. More than an origin. Over the years we've seen her origin in bits and pieces. I wanted to put it into context, showing how she came to what she is and what it means to her now as well as what it may mean to her in the future.

"She's very upset about having her soul split into two parts, being both a young, feminist female and a kind of 'girls-just-want-to-have-fun' tabby cat. She wants to rid herself of one of those personalities, the tiger personality. Of course she finds that that's real difficult to do. This plays itself out over a couple of issues."

WONDER MAN & THE THING

Englehart feels that Wonder Man has been especially abused over the years since his introduction in **Avengers** 9.

"For a long time people have been saying that Wonder Man could be Marvel's Superman. He's this really amazing character. But somehow or other he took this turn where he's afraid of death and is falling apart at the wrong time. On more than one occasion he's said, 'I'm a failure. I'm no good at this. I'm leaving.' It's hard to think of a guy as a sympathetic lead character if he keeps telling you that he's really not any good! I went back and dug into him to clear up these phobias. Shooter had cleared it up ten years ago, but then other people had him backslide.

"Having gotten out of the starting gate with the **West Coast Avengers**, issue by issue I'm having him more aware of just how powerful and successful he can be. One thing I'm doing is having him get a major co-starring role in **Conan** IV with Arnold Schwarzenegger, which is life imitating reality imitating life. I figured that if Arnold could go from body building into being a Hollywood star, then Wonder Man could go from an Avenger into being a movie star. I'll have a wonderful time playing this out as his success starts to fall into place."

Which brings us up to the Thing. Having quit the Fantastic Four, he went clear across the country and is hanging out with the **West Coast Avengers**. While it was originally planned to make him a member, the cancellation of the Thing's individual title has caused other plans to be worked

HANK PYM has had a very rough time in recent Marvel history!

MARVEL
25TH
ANNIVERSARY
1986 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
75¢
U.K. 40p
CAN 95¢
267
MAY
THE
AVENGERS
KANG™
LIVES!

up, not all of which Englehart is free to reveal.

"I think that we'll be seeing some of them by the time this interview appears," Englehart explains. "We're playing it a little more trickily, but Hawkeye really gets into the idea. He knows they'll really fall down back East when he's able to call them up and tell them that he's hired the Thing. But the Thing doesn't want to join. He was just with the F.F. and he's not interested. I can't say what effect the cancellation of his title has, but it does change plans that I had made."

Firebird wants to fill the final open slot as a full-fledged Avenger, but she has to contend with Hawkeye's eagerness to sign up the Thing, former member of the world's premiere hero team.

By nature, she is someone who would enjoy being in a superhero team," says Englehart. "Unfortunately she has shown up at the Avengers right at the time that Hawkeye has walked off with the Thing. No matter what she does, nobody pays any attention to her. She's quite frustrated by all this. On the other hand, she's a very moral and long-suffering woman and bears this cross silently."

THE AVENGERS—THEN AND NOW

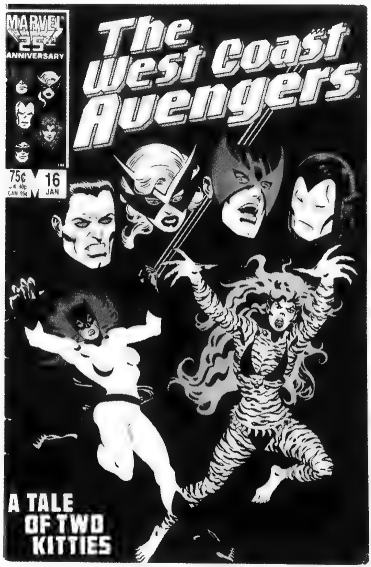
Steven Englehart wrote the original **Avengers** comic in the Seventies. He brings that perspective to the new spin-off series.

"I've written a number of different teams over the years. While the Justice League of America (the original lineup) comes close to being like the Avengers, they're more a group of like-minded individuals. I always get the feeling that the JLA is working together because they are the major heroes of Earth and just get together when needed. The Avengers started out that way but it's become a group of comrades—people work in the Avengers best if they fit in with the people involved. Those who have trouble fitting in generally don't last for long. As more and more people have gotten to be Avengers, it works for them to put together two groups. The Avengers is a way for a lot of friends to get together and do something worthwhile."

Englehart doesn't think that the **West Coast Avengers** is just a carbon copy of the regular **Avengers** comic.

"I wrote the east coast Avengers back when they were the only Avengers. There is a difference between the two groups. The east coast Avengers are a more traditional group just as the East Coast/West Coast general outlook. The East Coasters are more concerned with tradition and with raw power. The West Coast Avengers, by the nature of the West Coast and of the characters themselves, are all a little bit whacko." But Steve is quick to point out that "They are still Avengers and will still take on anybody that the other group can take on.

"I have written a lot of different teams over the years. What I always try to do is get into the heads of the people involved and let them set the tone. I think that my



A was different from my Avengers. I'm getting to do Avengers level again, but these guys are telling more and having more fun at it. They're ling a legend here. The East Coast up, even if it's made up of Hawkeye, the and every joker in town, still has a tation and a legend to live up to.

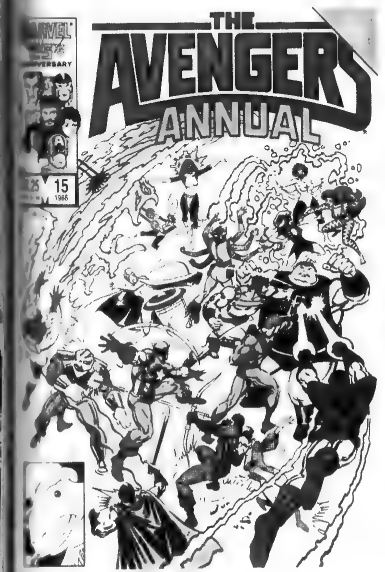
The West Coast Avengers is just an exsion of the Avengers. These people *are* ngers. Yet for the first time they're forng a second group in a town which they n't spent a lot of time in. They're living ngst different situations—palm trees, mming pools, movie stars. I see a pretty difference between the two groups never forgetting that they are all ngers. There's something good about ng an Avenger, something that is really tive and that's one of the things that them apart from any of the other groups. It's an honor to be an Avenger and people have to live up to that honor. The West Coast Avengers understand that but at the same time really feel that this is an opportunity to create an Avengers in their own image.

"Iron Man is the only East Coast type who's been a leader. Everybody else has always been among the second rank. Hawkeye has been around so long that you might call him first rank, but he's a little less developed than Thor, Captain America and Iron Man. Beyond that, Mockingbird is new, Tigra and Wonder Man are self-confessed failures from before and the Thing and Firebird are not really a part of it. It's their chance to show what they can do, but nobody can be an Avenger and still be real second rate. These guys have just as much right to be called Avengers as any member of the East Coast group.

THE RETURN OF THOR

Recently the Masters of Evil, a group whose origins date back to **Avengers** 6, reappeared in the title, led by the son of Baron Zemo (an old Captain America villain who had died back in **Avengers** 14). This new Masters of Evil included The Wrecker, Mr. Hyde and other villains who not only proved awesome but far more vicious even than the original band, as evidenced by the brutal injuries suffered by Hercules.

"Hercules will be on the disabled list for a long time," Stern reveals. Thus marks the most recent return to The Avengers of Thor, although this is a



very different Thor than has been seen in the group before.

"He's under the curse of Hela, and while he can't die, he also doesn't heal, so Thor's in a lot of pain these days," Stern explains.

Namor has been missing recently, but he'll be back in the spring. A previously announced plot thread involving Namor which was supposed to continue into an Alpha Flight graphic novel has apparently been dropped. "I think that was some odd plotline somebody had come up with where they planned to kill the Sub-Mariner," Stern reveals. "But we said that they couldn't do that because he's an Avenger!"

The Black Knight has proven to be a popular character in the series now and although there have been a lot of fan requests for a Black Knight mini-series, none is in the works. "There is a three part Black Knight story set to appear in Marvel Fanfare which takes place at the time of the Crusades which shows just how bad things were back then," Stern states, although he's not involved in that series himself.

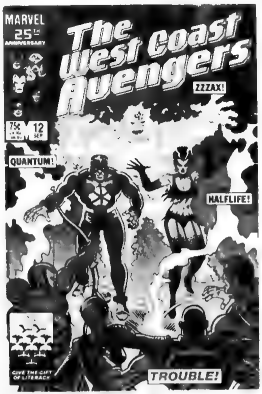
Stern has had a wonderful time working on **The Avengers** since his stint reunited John Buscema and Tom Palmer. "It's been great! They've actually been together on the book now longer than they were when they originally worked on it 15 years ago. It's been 2 years now. Tom Palmer has really been putting a lot into it and his son is a big Avengers fan. Whenever the pages come in he reads them to see what's happening now."

When asked whether he has a favorite Avenger, Stern says that he certainly likes the two Captains (America and Marvel), as well as Hercules and the others. "I can't really name a single favorite. That's like asking who your favorite child is!"

WAY OUT WEST

Meanwhile on the West Coast, Steve Englehart found that a number of plotlines that he was developing all fell together in a rather strange way and decided to run with it. Although conceived as a 7-part story, Englehart has considered going one additional in-

The West Coast Avengers have become nearly as popular as the Eastern originals!



tainment with it. The plotline will bring in Moon Knight who will stay on after-wards and join The West Coast Avengers.

While Hank Pym's life will be straightened out by the end of the time travel saga, he won't be reverting to any of his numerous superhero identities. That means no more Pym as Ant Man, Giant-Man, Goliath or Yellowjacket.

"I've been using him as he asked to be used," Englehart explains. "In the Egghead story, where he bombed out as Yellowjacket, he said that he would never be a superhero again, so I took him at his word. However, part of straightening out his life is straightening out all these problems. But while he won't be a superhero, he will be a hero." It just shows you that when things are at their bleakest, something really strange is bound to happen.

FILES MAGAZINES

(All files magazines are perfect bound with color covers and at least 60 pages)

Library

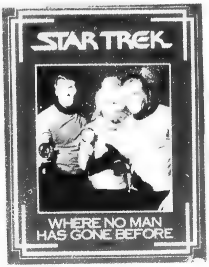
THE STAR TREK FILES

Go where no fan has gone before in a fantastically detailed and completely uniquc series devoted to everyone's favorite science fiction show. Gene Roddenberry's creation is showcased in cast biographies, character profiles, interviews, accurate episode guides and much more. This is one series you simply cannot afford to miss!

WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE.....$9.95

STAR TREK FILE ONE.....THE EARLY VOYAGES
STAR TREK FILE TWO.....TIME PASSAGES
STAR TREK FILE THREE.....A TASTE OF PARADISE
STAR TREK FILE FOUR...ON THE EDGE OF FOREVER
STAR TREK FILE FIVE.....MISSION: YEAR TWO
STAR TREK FILE SIX.....JOURNEY TO ETERNITY
STAR TREK FILE SEVEN.....THE DEADLY YEARS
STAR TREK FILE EIGHT....RETURN TO TOMORROW

(The above files are $5.95 each.)



And then came the movies when the fans of the show simply would not let it die! The adventure continues in a series of episodes even more elaborate in the production and special effects. These volumes combine interviews with story synopsis and perceptive analysis to retell the continuing Star Trek adventure.

STAR TREK MOVIE FILE ONE. THE MOTION PICTURE
STAR TREK MOVIE FILE TWO.....WRATH OF KHAN
STAR TREK MOVIE FILE THREE. SEARCH FOR SPOCK

(These volumes are $5.95 each)

THE DARK SHADOWS FILES

Dark Shadows is the most unique soap opera of all time! It is the only continuing daytime television series to feature a vampire as the central character as well as the only gothic soap opera of all time. This unique series is showcased in a series of episode guides, interviews, character profiles and cast biographies that not only retells the on-screen story but takes you behind the scenes to witness the phenomenon in the making and how everyone reacted to becoming the world's favorite horror ensemble!

THE DARK SHADOWS FILE ONE....COLLINWOOD
THE DARK SHADOWS FILE TWO.....RETURN

(The above volumes are $5.95 each)

MPS

Please!

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

Library

FILES MAGAZINES

(All files magazines are perfect bound with color covers and at least 60 pages)

THE LOST IN SPACE FILES

Lost in Space has the distinction of being the show that caused CBS to turn down Star Trek when Gene Roddenberry came around trying to peddle his new series! CBS felt that they already had a bigger winner in the Space Family Robinson. The show had interesting situations, characters that could often display real warmth and fantastic monsters. And it had everyone's favorite robot! Here in a collection of episode guides, interviews, character profiles and cast biographies the entire story is represented, both what was seen on the screen and what happened behind the scenes on the world's first interstellar picnic!

THE LOST IN SPACE FILES ONE.....LOST
THE LOST IN SPACE FILES TWO. FAMILY PICNIC

(The above volumes are $5.95 each)

THE V FILES

Many feel that V is one of the most interesting television science fiction series ever to be attempted. Others feel that while the miniseries displayed real quality the tv show itself was somehow lacking. Here in a collection of interviews and episode guides, along with character profiles and cast biographies, the entire invasion is explored by James Van Hise and crew. Van Hise is the editor of the world's leading magazine about aliens and monsters, **Monsterland**!

THE V FILE ONE.....THE ARRIVAL
HARDCOVER
(The above, oversized hardcover is $19.95)

THE V FILE BOOK TWO.....THE WAR
THE V FILE BOOK THREE.....STALEMATE

(The above volumes are $5.95 each)

MPS
MOVIE PUBLISHERS SERVICE, INC.

Please!

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

THE GERRY ANDERSON'S

Supermarionation is a fascinating process that differs in a very special way from ordinary animation. It allows things to be undertaken in the course of a story that couldn't otherwise be done. Gerry Anderson is both the father of the process and its greatest practicioner. With it he has created several exciting series of fantastic tales. Best known among them may well be The Thunderbirds, but other sci fi shows including Supercar and Fireball XL-5 are certainly worthy of note. In these volumes the process and the shows are looked at. Interviews combine with character profiles and episode guides to relate the story and the story within the story!

FIREBALL XL-5 FILE

STINGRAY FILE

(The above files are $5.95)

THUNDERBIRDS FILE

THE THUNDERBIRDS FILE ONE.....RESCUE
THE THUNDERBIRDS FILE TWO....CONCLUSION

(The above volumes are $6.95)

FILES MAGAZINES

(All files magazines are perfect bound with color covers and at least 60 pages)

Library

THE UNCLE FILES

UNCLE is back in the first series of its kind! Complete episode guides, detailed technical drawings, loads of photos, lots of behind-the-scenes information, cast biographies, character profiles...The scoop on how the revival was made, the revival that almost happened and even a glimpse of what the future may hold for your favorite espionage team.

THE UNCLE FILE CLASSIC ONE.... THE BEGINNING
THE UNCLE FILE CLASSIC TWO..... EARLY DAYS

(Note these two volumes reprint **The Earlist Days***)*

(These volumes are $6.95 each)

THE UNCLE FILES ONE.... THE AFFAIR CONTINUES
THE UNCLE FILES TWO..... DEADLY GAMES
THE UNCLE FILES THREE..... THE THIRD YEAR
THE UNCLE FILES FOUR.. . UNCLE OFF BROADWAY
THE UNCLE FILES FIVE . .TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER
THE UNCLE FILES SIX..... PIECES OF FATE

(The above volumes are $5.95 each)

THE UNCLE AGENT'S HANDBOOK....
ORGANIZATION & HEADQUARTERS... $9.95
WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT..... $9.95

THE AVENGERS FILES

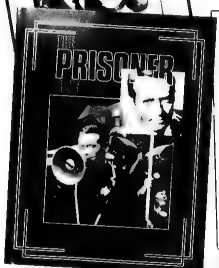
Everyone's favorite British spies cavort in this unique series. Join Steed and Peel and all the other beautiful partners in recounting their fabulous adventures in the most detailed and accurate episode guides ever created for the show. Plus character profiles, cast biographies and exclusive interviews with just everyone! This is every adventure fan's dream come true.

SEASONS ONE AND TWO
SEASONS THREE AND FOUR

(The above volumes are $9.95 each)

THE AVENGERS FILE ONE..... EMMA'S LAST YEAR
THE AVENGERS FILE TWO. KING MAKES THE SCENE
THE AVENGERS FILES THREE... A NEW BEGINNING
THE AVENGERS FILES FOUR.. . THE GRAND FINALE

(THE ABOVE VOLUMES ARE $5.95 each)



THE JAMES BOND FILES

James Bond has set the imaginations of the world aflame in an incredible series of fantastic adventures and sizzling love affairs. This blazing book offers each and every film in complete detail profiling every major character and giving biographies of the cast and crew. There are also revealing interviews. Simply loads of information never before offered. There is one volume for each movie, a never before undertaken task!

THE JAMES BOND FILES ONE..... DR. NO
THE JAMES BOND FILES TWO. . FROM RUSSIA W. LOVE
THE JAMES BOND FILES THREE..... GOLDFINGER
THE JAMES BOND FILES FOUR..... THUNDERBALL

(THE ABOVE VOLUMES ARE $5.95 EACH

THE PRISONER FILES

Enter the Village for a complete tour guided by Number Six. Episode guides, cast biographies and character profiles combine into a very special series about a very special television show. Including a detailed map and a photo tour of the Village!

THE PRISONER FILE ONE.... ENTER THE VILLAGE
THE PRISONER FILE TWO..... CAPTIVITY

(THE ABOVE VOLUMES ARE $5.95 EACH)

MPS

Please

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

Emila's MONSTER LAND LIBRARY

Copyright Ken and Jack Schaefer

RARE BACK ISSUES OF MONSTERLAND

1—This is an extremely rare issue, available on a first come, first sent basis...until it runs out!!!.....$25.00

(Note: Issue two is out of stock!)

~~3—Godzilla,George Pal:Dr. Caligari.....$10.00~~

4—Fright Night,Lugosi,Day Dead.....$10.00

~~5—Karloff,Fright Night,Chris Lee.....$10.00~~

5—Godzilla '85,Munro,Elm St. II,Naschy.....$5.00

~~7—Elvira,Munro,Chaney,Psycho III,Time Machine.....$5.00~~

8—Perkins,Elm St. II,Spielberg,Twilight Zone.....$5.00

9—Enemy Mine,Invaders from Mars,Godzilla,Lorre.$5.00

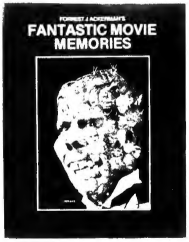
10—Empire, Poltergeist II, Tobe Hooper, Curse Frankenstein.....$5.00

11—Star Trek IV, Aliens, Barnabas Collins, John Carpenter.....$5.00

12—Sigourney Weaver, Critters, Outer Limits, Freaks, Freddy Krueger.$5.00

13—Deadly Friend, Creature Black Lagoon, Vincent Price, King Kong.$5.00

14—Cushing, Kong, Sinbad, Greg Cannom, Navigator, Boy Could Fly.$5.00

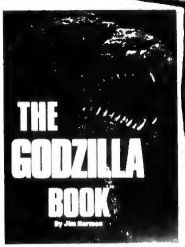


FANTASTIC MOVIE MEMORIES BOOK

Mr. Monster, Forrest J Ackerman has created the greatest monster book ever! Packed with obscure references and rare photos this is the one for your own BOO—shelf. **HARDCOVER** $19.95

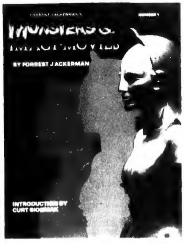
THE NEW FANTASY ILLUSTRATOR

A beautifully-printed, slickpaper book glowing with richly-colored reproductions of fantasy paintings by Tim Hildebrandt and Barclay Shaw. Included are in-depth interviews with the artists and with James Frankel, art director of Bluejay Books. A very special publication designed to be treasured for a lifetime, NEW FANTASY ILLUSTRATOR is now available for $12.00 postpaid.



GODZILLA BOOK

The world's most complete guide to the universe's most powerful monster! Complete production details couple with loads of behind-the-scenes technical information and story guides. Only $9.95



Don't miss out on **MAIM**, there may have been only one issue of this special, perfect bound magazine edited by Forry, but it belongs on every monster's bookshelf! Only $5.95!

ORDER ON COUPON PAGE

COUPON PAGE

MPS
MOVIE PUBLISHERS SERVICES INC

FILES MAGAZINES

- ☐ Avengers One&Two.....$8.95
- ☐ Avengers Three&Four.....$8.95
- ☐ Avengers File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Avengers File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File One.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ James Bond File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Dark Shadows File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Dark Shadows File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Nine.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who File Ten.....$5.95
- ☐ Doctor Who Classic File One...$6.95
- ☐ Doctor Who Classic File Two...$6.95
- ☐ Fireball XL-5 File.....$6.95
- ☐ Lost In Space File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Lost In Space File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Prisoner File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Prisoner File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Where No Man.....$8.95
- ☐ Star Trek File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File One.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ Star Trek Movie File Three...$5.95
- ☐ The Stingray File.....$6.96
- ☐ Thunderbirds File One.....$6.95
- ☐ Thunderbirds File Two.....$6.95
- ☐ UNCLE File One.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Three.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Four.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Five.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Six.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Seven.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Eight.....$5.95
- ☐ UNCLE Classic File One.....$6.95
- ☐ UNCLE File Classic Two.....$5.95
- ☐ V File Hardcover.....$19.95
- ☐ V File Two.....$5.95
- ☐ V File Three.....$5.95

HEROES

HEROES BOOKS

- ☐ Bronson.....9.95
- ☐ Eastwood.....9.95
- ☐ British Spies.....5.00
- ☐ Bond Dossier.....5.00
- ☐ UNCLE Handbook I.....9.95
- ☐ UNCLE Handbook II.....9.95

SCI FI

MONSTERLAND BOOKS

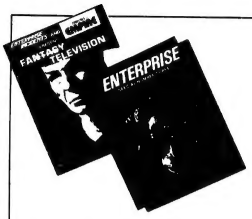
- ☐ Alien Cook.....5.00
- ☐ Lovecraft.....5.00
- ☐ Fantasy Illustrator.....12.00
- ☐ Fantastic Movie Memories9.95
- ☐ Godzilla Book.....9.95
- ☐ MAIM.....$5.95

MONSTERLAND

SCI FI

- ☐ Nimoy.....5.00
- ☐ Shatner.....5.00
- ☐ Interviews.....5.00
- ☐ Technical Side.....6.00
- ☐ Dune.....5.00
- ☐ Blueprinting.....12.00

- ☐ Folio I.....12.00
- ☐ Folio II.....12.00
- ☐ Folio 3.....12.00
- ☐ Folio 4.....12.00
- ☐ Folio Special!.....44.95
- ☐ Future Threads.....10.00
- ☐ Future Threads Deluxe..22.00
- ☐ Technical Book.....10.00
- ☐ Doctor&Enterprise.....10.00
- ☐ Baker.....5.00
- ☐ British TV.....5.00
- ☐ Pertwee.....5.00
- ☐ Sci Fi Costume.....$9.95
- ☐ Dr.&Ent. Hardcover.....$19.95



E.I. SPECIALS

- ☐Star Trek.....5.00
- ☐Star Wars.....5.00
- ☐Close Encounters.....5.00
- ☐Flash Gordon.....5.00
- ☐King Kong.....5.00
- ☐Fantasy TV.....5.00

MAGAZINE BACKLIST

MONSTERLAND

- ☐#1.....25.00
- ☐#3.....10.00
- ☐#4.....10.00
- ☐#5.....10.00
- ☐#6.....5.00
- ☐#7.....5.00
- ☐#8.....5.00
- ☐#9.....5.00

DAREDEVILS

- ☐#3.....5.00
- ☐#4.....5.00
- ☐#5.....5.00
- ☐#6.....5.00
- ☐#7.....5.00
- ☐#8.....5.00
- ☐#9.....5.00
- ☐#10.....5.00
- ☐#11.....5.00
- ☐#12.....5.00
- ☐#13.....5.00
- ☐#14.....5.00
- ☐#15.....5.00

FANTASY EMPIRE

- ☐#3.....5.00
- ☐#5.....5.00
- ☐#7.....5.00
- ☐#8.....5.00
- ☐#9.....5.00
- ☐#10.....5.00
- ☐#12.....5.00
- ☐#13.....5.00
- ☐#14.....5.00
- ☐#15.....5.00
- ☐#16.....5.00
- ☐#18.....5.00
- ☐#19.....5.00

HEROES

- ☐#1.....10.00
- ☐#2.....5.00
- ☐#3.....5.00
- ☐#4.....5.00

FANTASY EMPIRE LTD.

- ☐#2.....6.00
- ☐#3.....6.00

ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS

- ☐Special 1.....5.00
- ☐Special 2.....5.00
- ☐Special 3.....5.00
- ☐Special 4.....6.00
- ☐Special 5.....6.00
- ☐Special 6.....6.00
- ☐9.....15.00
- ☐10.....12.00
- ☐11.....10.00
- ☐12.....10.00
- ☐Summer.....10.00
- ☐14.....8.00
- ☐15.....8.00
- ☐16.....8.00
- ☐17.....8.00
- ☐18.....8.00
- ☐19.....5.00
- ☐21.....5.00
- ☐22.....5.00
- ☐23.....5.00
- ☐24.....5.00
- ☐25.....5.00
- ☐26.....5.00
- ☐27.....5.00
- ☐28.....5.00
- ☐29.....5.00
- ☐30.....5.00
- ☐31.....4.00
- ☐32.....4.00
- ☐33.....4.00
- ☐34.....4.00
- ☐35.....4.00

COMICS FEATURE

- ☐28.....7.00
- ☐29.....6.00
- ☐30.....5.00
- ☐31.....5.00
- ☐#33.....5.00

BACKLIST

- ☐ #37.....5.00
- ☐ #38.....5.00
- ☐ #39.....4.00
- ☐ #40(Jan).....4.00
- ☐ #40(Feb).....4.00
- ☐ #41.....4.00
- ☐ #42.....4.00
- ☐ #43.....6.00

ENTERPRISE

- ☐ #1.....10.00
- ☐ #2.....5.00
- ☐ #3.....5.00
- ☐ #5.....5.00
- ☐ #9.....5.00
- ☐ #10.....5.00
- ☐ #11.....5.00

THE COUPON COUPON: Please check all items desired and total the amounts. Then write a check, o.k.? Hey! Don't forget to clip out the section with the items checked and send it along—so **we** know what to send back!

All items postpaid. **Do not send cash.** All payments must be made in U.S. funds.

MPS

8399 Topanga Canyon Boulevard
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip_____

Total cost of order

FOREIGN AND CANADIAN ORDERS MUST ADD $1.00 SHIPPING PER ITEM ORDERED. WE SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR THIS BUT UNFORTUNATELY YOUR POST OFFICE WILL NOT HONOR UNITED STATES BULK MAIL PERMITS!

Please allow **8** to 12 weeks for delivery.

The Avengers have been the premiere superhero team in the Marvel Universe for over two decades now, ever since they started with a lineup including virtually every major superhero that Marvel Comics published in the early 1960s. They have not always been the most popular, the best-selling, but they have always had the distinction of being the one recognized by the government, the one where writers could promote heroes that they wanted to give more attention.

The lineup of heroes composing The Avengers changed frequently over the years with virtually everyone making an appearance at one time or another. Sometimes the team was weak, other times quite strong, sometimes the stories were interesting, other times they merely tread water and took up space until a more inspired tale could be begun. But they were always important.

In this volume you'll be introduced to the various heroes who proudly called themselves Avenger, you'll learn the history of the team and hear how the current writers view their tales. And you'll even witness a typical year in the history of the group—not one of their best years, perhaps, but typical enough.

Combined, the visuals and the text of this volume provide a perceptive critique of the history of one of America's most important comic books.

CF-6
$5.95
$8.99 Canada
ISBN 1-55698-011-6
1-55698-053-1